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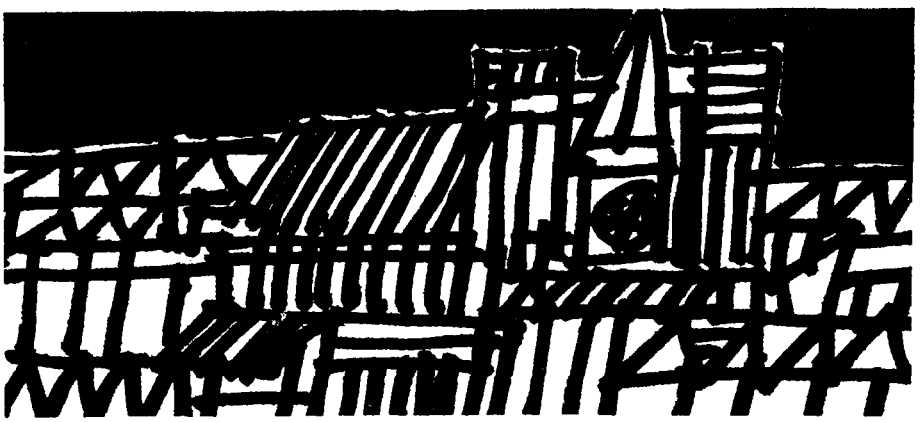

REFORMING THE PARISH

A Special Issue

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NEWS AND VIEWS

An article by Michael Novak in *The Christian Century* on "A Guide to Protestant Ploys" drew a more nettled but more cautiously labeled response by Max Stackhouse ("A Guide to the Ploys of Some Catholics") which says, in part: "One of the most frequent ploys of our Catholic brethen is the 'we've had it all the time' syndrome. This is exemplified in the call for continual reanalysis of the traditional language in terms of its function. (This very helpful ploy is used also by Protestant biblicists. . . .) Now it's all right to analyze language in terms of function, for then one can see the the terms functioning in relationship to themselves, and by assuming alternative concepts of 'function' and 'relationship' one can make them come out as one sees fit. Thus St. Thomas, who never seems to have meant what he said, has successively been rated a rational objectivist, an existentialist, a British analytical philosopher, now a rational subjectivist and perhaps soon a 'death of God' theologian."

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The Netherlands, in one day, raised $5 million for the relief of famine victims in India. All the churches—Protestant, Roman Catholic, Old Catholic—plus secular organizations and five TV and radio networks joined in the appeal.

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This week's Talleyrand Award for political agility will be shared between Alex Quaison-Sackey and Richard M. Nixon. Mr. Q-S, who served Nkrumah at the U.N., got his grip on the trophy by referring (in a jailhouse interview) to the new Ghana regime as "us." Mr. Nixon, no stranger to the Talleyrand competition, is co-winner for discovering unsuspected cunning on the part of U.S. Communists: they managed to get groups going under the name "The DuBois Clubs," so as to confuse loyal followers of "The Boys Clubs" of America by the mix-up in names. Anyone who thinks the clubs DuBois were actually named after W.E.B. DuBois is a dupe.

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Sylvia Porter, economist and columnist, says in Medical World News that the cost of bringing up a child in America (to age 18) is $23,835. No private school or college tuition included. Since the average family has 3.2 children, the average couple will spend $76,272 getting their brood to age 18.

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An Italian criminal court has acquitted two men, one of them a priest, on charges of illegally advocating conscientious objection to military service. The verdict, which contrasts with the traditional sternness of Italian military courts, may owe something to Vatican II's defense of the right of conscientious objection.

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"The 'decrease in anti-clericalism' which we think cause for satisfaction is not necessarily always a happy sign. Certainly it could come from a change in the objective situation, or a real amelioration here and there. But it could also mean that those who are recognized as the Church, while offering the world some precious values, have conformed to it, to its ideals, to its standards, to its customs. From this point on they are no longer troublesome. That the salt can lose its savor, the Gospel tells us often enough. And if we are living more or less tranquilly in the middle of the world, it is perhaps because we are lukewarm."

—Henri de Lubac

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America magazine for March 12 carries an article by Vicente Andrade intended to show that the Church was not responsible for the downfall of Camilo Torres, the rebel leader in Colombia (also see "Death of a Rebel Priest" in last week's COMMONWEAL.) It concluded: "All of us, his friends and former professors, tried in those days to reach him, but in vain. He had shut himself off. Leaders of Catholic-oriented reform movements assured him they would follow him—if he kept to Christian principles. He failed to reply to them too. He knew about those Christian reform movements, but was interested only in a Marxist solution. It is quite unfair and contrary to the facts to hold the hierarchy responsible for Camilo Torres' downfall."

Some of the local clergy apparently don't see it that way. Father Eduardo Arango, OFM, took to the radio and declared that both Church and State share the blame for the slaying. He said members of the Church were guilty "from the moment when they ousted him from the Cardinal's residence, afterwards persecuting him like a rat, closing all good roads before him." The State has asked the Church to move against Arango, but the Church is currently hedging.

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Every step counts: The Archdiocese of Boston has announced that for the first time, "mixed marriage" couples may apply to adopt a child through its charitable agencies.

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Robert Heilbroner, in the *New York Review of Books*: "Professor (Herbert) Simon foresees an average family income (in today's prices) of $14,000 twenty years hence; and he has no doubt that these families will have plenty of use for their entire income. But why stop there? On this assumption of a 3 per cent annual growth rate, average family incomes will be $56,000 by the year 2025; $112,000 by 2045; and $224,000 a century from today. Is it beyond human nature to think that at this point (or a great deal sooner), a ceiling will have been put on demand —if not by edict, then tacitly? To my mind, it is hard not to picture such a ceiling unless the economy is to become a collective vomitorium."

JOHN LEO

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CORRESPONDENCE

"On Judging God"

Gary, Ind.

To the Editors: Although God did not answer Job when he stood on "personal integrity," I am breathlessly waiting for His answer in COMMONWEAL to Daniel Callahan whose personal right obligates God to answer. (Please renew my subscription *ad aeternitatem.*) We have a human right, no one doubts I'm sure, to question "Why evil?" and even "Why this or that evil?" within the ranges of faith and metaphysics (which is quite a different genre, by the way, than consoling the afflicted). But is it possible that human suffering is too mysterious for human understanding? One would expect COMMONWEAL to avoid and eschew the hope of an "easy answer." I cannot resist the temptation to suggest that Mr. Callahan has become an old-fashioned rationalist—not with any answers, I grant, but in his definition of the issue.

To cease being facetious, I wonder if Mr. Callahan isn't granting too little to the mystery of suffering and evil and thereby making somewhat light of it. If no answer is forthcoming in Job, perhaps we should read it that God could not speak in a way that Job (or we) would understand. Maybe God did not miss or avoid the point of Job's stand on personal dignity with a right to an answer. If we accept that evil is unintelligible on the natural and humanistic levels, it may still be that it is supra-intelligible. A man should not be asked to suffer for much less.

JACK GRUENENFELDER

Birth Control

Hollis, N.Y.

To the Editors: At this particular time, post-Vatican II discussion on modern marriage and pre-papal decision on birth control, married Catholics are left facing problems of sizable proportions. These problems are again

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REFORMING THE PARISH

One of the more striking omissions of Vatican II was any sustained discussion of the parish. Many of the decrees and declarations, of course, bore on one or another aspect of the problem, but the very idea of a parish, much less its present general place and task, received scant comment. Nor have there been, oddly enough, many books published on the parish, an especially serious gap when the main contact most Catholics have with the Church is in their local parish.

A special issue on the parish can hardly close the gap; it can do no more than bring forth a description of the present situation and some tentative suggestions for reform. The difficulties of reform are unusually acute, for in the parish an awesome complex of money, buildings, people and theology come together in the most concrete way. A change in the theology of the parish may be the simplest task of all, and the most difficult that of changing its institutional and financial character. For to fully reform most parishes would mean a change in the way the people are treated, the books are kept, the money is spent, the organizations formed, the sermons preached, the buildings built, the rectory organized, the community approached. Each one of these areas poses some obstacles, but taken together they are bewildering.

Bewildering or not, they must be dealt with. In a very important way, what the parish becomes will be a measure of what the Council has achieved and what the Church will mean to the ordinary person and to the ordinary community. The parish can be a light set on a hill or that place where people discharge their "religious duties." It is time to choose.

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LAYMEN IN THE PARISH

Has the Church anything to learn from democracy, and specifically American democracy? There are those who like to think of the Church as somehow outside all political systems and cultures. In one sense, of course, it is, but in another fundamental way it is not and cannot be cut off from the culture in which it finds itself. The Church must take shape in this place, in this culture, in this time.

If one thinks about it, the marks of history on internal practices in the Church are obvious. Look, for example, at such customs as kissing a bishop's ring and calling him "Your Excellency"—practices which are clearly remnants of a feudal past rather than reflections of the essential nature of the episcopacy. Customs like these are beginning to disappear, I think, and a good thing too, but look how long they have lingered on in the Church.

This is my point: not to belabor once more my conviction that such medieval trappings do us much harm but simply to note that the Church absorbs something from every age it lives in and there is no reason at all why things should be different in the case of modern democracy. (Some argue, and I agree, that the Declaration on Religious Liberty already demonstrates this fact.) I don't think the Council's stress on collegiality in the Constitution on the Church and Pope Paul's gesture in creating a new Synod of bishops really reflect this fact, as some have suggested; good as these things are, they simply involve recognition that the bishops as successors of the Apostles constitute a body with the Pope and should share with him a concern for the universal Church. But there is no reason at all that much of the practical wisdom, working techniques, and solid accomplishments of democracy cannot be integrated into many ecclesiastical activities.

A small but instructive step along these lines, it seems to me, and highly appropriate in this discussion, is the revision and updating of parish committees some months ago in the diocese of Pittsburgh. After conferring with the diocesan consultors, Bishop John J. Wright promulgated an official decree strengthening and expanding the work of such committees in every parish in the diocese. The changes made—to include women, for instance—had one purpose: to broaden the base of lay interest, responsibility and participation in day-by-day parish affairs.

Bishop Wright's directive makes the election and operation of such committees mandatory in every parish in the diocese, without exception. What will such committees do? "The Parish Committee shall serve as a consultative body to the pastor in all matters that pertain to the temporal and spiritual good of the parish, their duties including, but not being limited to, the following:

"a. They shall advise and consult with the pastor respecting the effective carrying out of and the quality of the parish liturgical services, the parish music, public address systems, ushering and whatever pertains to the promotion of the apostolic programs of the Church.

"b. They shall assist the pastor in his administration of the material needs of the parish, such as maintenance, physical improvements, expansion of parish facilities; and in general, provision for the decent condition of church buildings and properties.

"c. They shall advise the pastor concerning community trends, problems and opportunities that call for apostolic cooperation and shall be available to represent the parish in the civil community and in any other way in which lay representation may be conducive to the purposes of the Church and the common good of the general community."

There is more, but that gives an idea. Obviously, not everyone would find service on such a committee his cup of tea, and equally obviously not everyone would be good at it. But it seems to me the reasoning behind these committees is exactly right. This has been called the Age of the Layman painfully often. Yet too often the average Catholic's role is that of passive onlooker—active in the sense that he attends Mass and receives the Sacraments but passive in the sense that he plays no more active role than that even in his own parish, that his views are never sought and indeed are too often positively unwelcome.

Some of this is the layman's own fault, of course. Too many have nothing to say; too many conceive of their role in such passive terms that they would never dream of making a suggestion to their pastor or bishop. Yet every day there are more and more educated laymen who do have something to say. If their energies are to be put to effective use, we need new structures, new institutions. To me, Bishop Wright's initiative in Pittsburgh looks like a welcome attempt in that direction, one which would bear imitation elsewhere.

JAMES O'GARA

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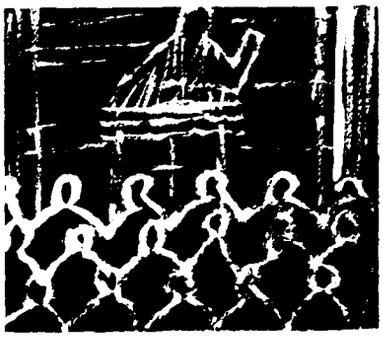

THE SERVANT PARISH

It must be flexible

JOSEPH E. CUNNEEN

This is hardly the time for large generalizations about parish structures and practice. The Vatican Council has only sketched out some preliminary notes for a definition of the Church; the emphasis on collegiality has given us a greater awareness of the role of the bishop; we must now try to understand the parish as an extension of the bishop's presence, as a community which is centered on liturgical worship, and becomes most clearly a reality during the eucharistic service.

The parish is the ecclesiastical unit served by a local church, but this is not too helpful a definition in our increasingly mobile society. Our neighborhood may be less defined by geography than by the kind of work we do, and the social, cultural, and spiritual worlds we actually inhabit. Father Fichter's image of the parish as a spiritual service-station reflects the difficulty of building up the old-style parish communities which were once so meaningful in European Catholic villages. Busy in such varied worlds during the week, we may think we only need the parish for Mass and the sacraments; any given Sunday we are apt to be going away for the weekend or visiting friends, and attending Mass in another parish.

Whatever the incompleteness of a territorial understanding of the parish, however, we know that it is something more than a community at worship during a few hours on a particular day of the week. A reading of the Acts of the Apostles or the Code of Canon Law should make it clear that both in its tradition and its legal structure the parish is clearly related to social service. Christianity is rooted in the fact of the Incarnation, and the Church can never offer itself to men as a purely spiritual reality. As Rahner has said, "The reason for this spatial structure of the Church is a very profound one, precisely because of its primitive nature, and is easily comprehensible: the Church's pastoral care is concerned with the *whole* man, and with men insofar as they form a people, which as such is to enter the Kingdom of God." Better to be busy with cake sales and bingo games than to offer an austere religion reserved for disembodied liturgical enthusiasts!

This is not to deny that the inherent dynamism in the "new" liturgy—now in its early stages of reform and often imposed without preparation by pastors who may be indifferent or hostile to the changes they are executing—logically entails a deeper social awareness among those who truly participate in it. Although the altar is the center of parish life, this life must radiate from that center into every avenue of human concern.

Of course, it can be pointed out that exclusive emphasis on the liturgy has never been a real temptation for the American parish; indeed, we have been so busy that it has been hard to stop long enough to reflect on what we are busy about. The apparent organizational success of American Catholicism—the money-raising, the constant building, the parochial school system, the wide range of parish groups, the statistics on Mass attendance and the reception of Holy Communion—makes it difficult to develop a sense of urgency about

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the need for renewal. Married deacons might be useful—in Latin America. Some adaptation of the priest-worker idea might be tried—in countries with a sizable Communist vote. A greater understanding of the implications of religious freedom is needed—in Spain. But for the United States the strategy seems to be: don't break up a winning team.

Spiritual Impact?

Few would want to claim, however, that statistical gains for Catholicism have meant a significant spiritual impact on American life. Even if we reject the idea that much of Catholic parish activity is a kind of group-memorial to itself, we at least ought to recognize that the concern for an individualistic salvation, the unbalanced moralizing, the neurotic anti-Communism, and the general defensiveness before the onslaught of the "modern" world is very much related to the idea of a parish as an island of security turned in on itself ("our" parish; for the priest, "my" parish), uninvolved in the agonies and struggles of the men around it.

The image that the Church offers the outside world would become radically different as soon as the parish was understood to be responsible for all who live within its boundaries. It is in some measure a mission station, not in any spirit of proselytizing, but in training its members to be attentive to the human needs about them, respecting the variety of responses to the question of man's destiny. In such a perspective, the secularization of modern life will be seen more as an opportunity than as a threat. If we give up trying to provide a total range of activities and organizations within which Catholics (who already "have" the faith) can preserve their religion, we may be freer to undertake the evangelization of the total community, in which Catholics will express their concern by discovering—and responding—to the human problems in their midst.

This hardly provides us with any formula for deciding what social services the parish should offer. It is easy to see that secular society is gradually taking over many of the functions formerly assumed by the Church. The great network of institutions—from parish athletic teams and Catholic scout troups to schools, hospitals, and various charitable and social agencies—should be seen as valid Christian responses to needs of a particular time and place. The difficulty is that at a certain point Catholic activity—and the educational mission of the parish—may unthinkingly find satisfaction in the constant drive to keep up the institutional complex. The original energy and dynamism is reduced to an instinctive conservatism. The fact that a secular and pluralistic society is increasingly performing services for which the Church had built up its own institutions is regarded as a danger or even as un-Christian, whereas it represents a potential gain for the human community.

There is no space here to review the arguments for and against parochial schools, but the schools do provide the most obvious example of an institution which, whatever its merits, now consumes a disproportionate share of parochial energies merely to insure its continued existence. It is quite possible, of course, that Mary Perkins Ryan is wrong and that parochial schools *are* still necessary today, but one would think that a minimal indication of a healthy attitude on this subject would be a deep sigh of regret if this is so. If we could possibly do the job of providing a Christian education for our children in any other way, we should be glad to do so. As of now, it may be that we must simply work to improve the schools we have, and make sure that they bring their students to a greater degree of openness—while greatly expanding our efforts in parish CCD activity. Such a conviction, however, should keep us all alert to discover new approaches to the problem of religious formation and constantly remind us that the growth of "our" institutions is most often at the cost of missing other opportunities for a possibly larger service.

If our primary principle, however elusive, is that the parish must be free to respond to the challenges of a fast-changing society, it is clear that the first requirements will be a vastly better and continuing communication between parish priests and laymen. As matters now stand, the layman is not even consulted regarding plans for the building of a new church. The pastor merely passes on a decision from the diocese, and the professional money-raisers move in with their distortions of the idea of Christian sacrifice. But there is no time for recriminations; it is clear that the present inadequate relationship of the parish to the world does not derive from lack of priestly zeal or lay concern: it merely makes clear that no real exchange has yet taken place.

No one knows what the result of really open and constant communication might be. It would certainly mean both the raising of more questions and a greater involvement of Christians, and would bring the parish into closer contact with reality. Laymen should, of course, let priests know their desires; for evening Mass, new approaches to—and responsibility for—parish financing, smaller parishes, the use of parish societies for the religious education of adults. Priests who responded to this kind of challenge from their parishioners would be in a better position to make a corresponding contribu-

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tion: pointing out the inadequacies of seminary training in preparing them for their present tasks; calling for a revision of the present arrangement in which the initiative and zeal of the young priest is stifled by the routine of the large parish and the long years of prudent time-serving before genuine responsibility can be exercised.

With lines of communication opened, the parish would be in a position to conduct a useful census, which would be concerned to uncover not only the talents and preoccupations of its members, but also the special resources and problems of the local population. Priests and laymen together have the responsibility of involving the parish in the opportunities for cooperation and constructive social action which may exist near at hand. In some cases it may mean that the parish will itself feel obliged to organize a credit union, a tutoring program, or a teen-age recreation center. More often, it will mean forming adult Catholics in a greater awareness of Christian social principles, and encouraging their cooperation with existing organizations, social agencies, and so on.

As things now stand, however, while the Church is re-examining its nature and its most distinguished theologians are emphasizing the theme of the servant Church, the parish seems to remain the most resistant element of the ecclesiastical structure. In her intensive analysis of the attitudes of priests in the Boston archdiocese, Sister Marie Augusta Neal discovered that it was precisely the pastors who were least oriented to change, or even to an awareness of the actual situation in the outside world. "The diocese can at the same time be articulate in its value-commitments to change and resistant in its day-to-day programing of the routine of the parish. At the parish level there still prevails the conception of the social structure of the Church as an unchanging given, of the laity as the masses to be led, and of the apostolate limited to parish boundaries and not inclusive of the world and the larger community." This helps to explain why the social services still provided by most parishes tend to be self-serving, or at best to reflect the interests of an earlier, defensive-minded generation.

In such a situation, initiative must be taken by those who see tasks around them calling out for Christian witness, without concern that the group that may grow out of a particular activity has no official Catholic sponsorship, and perhaps cannot even use the local parish hall as a meeting place. At the same time, every opportunity should be taken to initiate frank exchanges aimed at informing the parish with the spirit of the Council. Without being an alarmist, the current estrangement of our most responsible apostolic groups from parish involvement needs to be underlined. For example, anyone in touch with the more vital student leaders at Catholic colleges or Newman centers these days should be disturbed that the gulf between the vision they have caught of the Church and the reality of their home parish seems all but unbridgeable. Unless the seminaries training secular priests and the parishes to which they will be sent are drastically reformed, can we really expect the more gifted and dedicated of those young men who respond to a specifically religious vocation to enter the diocesan priesthood?

Creating Flexibility?

The primary goal is always that of awareness and communication, leaving the parish flexible enough to serve in whatever ways seem most necessary. It will become clear, as soon as almost any social need is confronted seriously, that the awareness that the parish can foster will quickly lead those that become involved to consider the larger framework and to cooperate with national social organizations, diocesan commissions, etc. There is a constant movement toward centralization and greater planning; the ideal of the self-sufficient parish is obviously an anachronism, and it is unfair to ask a parish organization to tackle a national problem. At the same time, there is an increasing desire for smaller ecclesiastical units, and a new appreciation of the intimacy of a liturgical community.

More experiments are needed in this direction, with the individual priest operating out of a street-level office in a housing development and celebrating weekday Mass in homes or apartments; greater resourcefulness is also needed in finding ways in which the parish can in some measure follow us into the various sub-communities that our modern society of work and technology naturally creates. It is not a matter of forming additional parishes in any canonical sense, but of encouraging greater flexibility by having individual priests assigned to assure a greater presence of the Church in this university, this medical center, this large plant, this corporation headquarters.

In whatever is tried, however, we must never forget the role of the parish in providing our basic education as Christians. If this is tackled realistically and in depth, individual questions regarding specifically parish organizations will be seen in proper perspective. It will be no paradox if in the next generation the older parish organizations dwindle in importance and numbers of members, while the local churches experience a new vitality, their members having discovered that parish boundaries now include the whole world.

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From raffles to reform

A PROTESTANT VIEW

MARTIN E. MARTY

The Non-Catholic, or at least this non-Catholic, observer has at least four sets of instruments at his disposal as he measures and constructs the outline of the Catholic parish. Impressions, first of all, personal as they must be. Of sweaty gymnasiums from a misspent childhood as an aspiring but anti-Catholic basketball-playing midget at Guardian Angels school. Of the utter cordiality and neighborliness of young Queen of the Rosary parish. Impressions of carnivals and raffles and bazaars and parish dances, stamped on a post-Puritan consciousness as evidences of the Anti-Christ and full measures of Roman sin. Of the odor of incense in ten thousand musty churches from a thousand days of architectural tourism. Remembered moments of baroque beauty and rococo ugliness. Parochial schools and the-parish-in-urban-politics; the witness of traffic jams on Sunday morning and the piles of Chicago *Tribunes* stacked outside the church-doors. Experimental drama in some churches and pitiful tract-racks in others; ecumenical soirées in Catholic auditoriums and in the living rooms of parishioners. Enough: but really, the impressions are not useless as a context for the other instruments which include the more formal windows on Catholic parishes.

By formal windows I mean the established patterns for two-way exchange, the conversations devoted to understanding which have marked recent decades of interfaith and ecumenical relations. In the literature accompanying this movement, Catholic parishes have been provided with opportunity to place their best profiles forward as well as to expose anxieties of priests and faithful. A third instrument for defining the parish is sociological analysis. The bibliographical alphabet of Roman Catholics here—Boulard, Fichter, Gremillion, Houtart, Michonneau, Nuesse, Pin—is as familiar to Protestants as is the list of names of Protestant social analysts who have been preoccupied with the parish.

Theological reflection on the meaning of the parish is the fourth tool for those who wish to form composite pictures. Sometimes the reflection is romantic and more often it is grim; sometimes it squares with empirical church life and sometimes it skews the historical pictures. In any case the work of men like Karl Rahner and others who have paid the parish the compliment of their attention has contributed to the non-Catholic view of the Catholic parish and given some perspective and confidence to those who venture generalizations. The materials are there, credentials can be gained. Most important: Roman Catholic parishes are now exposed to view almost anywhere in a free society. As cities set upon hills, they influence environment and are influenced to some degree, also by non-Catholic observation.

Despite the availability of measuring and defining tools, surprisingly little formal non-Catholic observation has been forthcoming. For one thing, Protestants have not written the history of their own parishes, so it is quite natural that they have not turned systematic attention to Catholic ones. Protestant ministers have been too busy with pastoral detail to set to the task, and historians have found the history of the parish too undramatic and too intangible, its potential sources too scattered.

Now, suddenly, as priest and nun march at the side of minister; as Catholic and Protestant parishioners join forces to demonstrate for (or against) open housing or better schools in local communities; when liturgical renewal allows or calls for ecumenical contact between parishes, suddenly the mirrored or reflected view becomes urgent and little material is available. Catholics can find what Protestants think of the Vatican Council, Catholic teaching on The Pill, the novels of Graham Greene, the personality of Pope Paul. But they can find out little of the general understanding of the broad bases for day-to-day Catholic-non-Catholic contacts.

When reports are turned in, as my own brief outline also reveals, the fundamental vision of the Catholic parish is of the degree of change which it experiences. This will be surprising to the impatient members of "lay elites" in the parishes, who see what surrounds them to be for the most part slow-moving. If the non-Catholic were a participant, from 52 to 365 times a year, in the organized life of a Catholic parish, he would share the vision.

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However, he looks down the wrong end of a telescope in order to gain distance and he bothers to look but rarely. Therefore in this respect as in most others his view of Catholicism tends to be divided into two moments: pre-1958 and post-1958. Before Pope John rendered Catholic-non-Catholic contacts really licit, open and shared life between Catholic and Protestant parishioners was rare, informal, and almost furtive. In that period Catholic parish life tended to be marked by at least three features in non-Catholic eyes: mystery or remoteness; a para-community status; an independent sense of destiny.

A sense of mystery characterized the parish's existence. Often the walls of the Catholic ghetto remained, and the goings-on of parishioners were seen to be arcane when they were seen at all. Often the parishes carried a certain ethnic or national flavor which the erosions of a mobile and pluralist society have subsequently tended to alter. Everything conspired to add to the sense of mystery: a foreign language in the Mass; another foreign language (Polish, Italian, German) at the parish supper; unexplained modes of church life like the confessional, the sacramental system as a whole, shadowed and dark buildings full of incense and candles, evidences of an almost superstitious regard for holy objects—why, it was positively un-American!

When people build ghetto walls around a community the community often strengthens them. Many priests and parishioners saw values in the sheltered life and did what they could to enhance the sense of remoteness and the penumbra of mysteriousness. Ethnocentrism was instinctive and it was cultivated ("Would you want your daughter to marry one of them?" . . .) Good public relations could have destroyed much of the shared life in the parish and mysteriousness was no liability.

Today, post-Pope John, the mystery is going and with it both the values and liabilities it produced. The architecture of the newer churches makes this evident: the sacred mystery is elevated as never before in liturgical action and emphasis, but the contrived and melodramatic conjury of mystery has disappeared as the sacramental elements are accessible at the relocated and often central altar, at the newly prominent font of baptistry, or in the dynamism of relationships of the elements in church-buildings. The naves are airy and light. The priest is on stage at the high school baccalaureate, present at ministerial alliances, a welcome participant in all forms of community affairs. The nature of parochial life is exposed to public view, and Catholicism not only does not care to prevent but sets out to stimulate contact, interaction, and appraisal: an experiment which non-Catholics are observing with interest.

The second general change has been away from the church as a para-community, a miniature reproduction of community inside the larger environment. I am well aware that much sociological analysis suggests the tenacity of this para-community picture and reality, and that many sociologists foresee an expansion instead of a contraction of this peculiar feature of religious life. That is, in a bewildering and almost meaninglessly complex pluralist environment, a person loses identity by being a "citizen in general." Through various kinds of personal associations he is integrated into the environment. For many, clubs perform this agency. For Christian believers, religious institutions play a part. Here, argue institutionalists and social psychologists, is the real strength of the parish in the modern setting. People find identity there, and this social need is rendered profound by the theological context. Further, since the parish itself is large and complex, it must be broken down into manageable and graspable units, must reproduce most needs of the larger environment.

So it was that the parish leaders felt it necessary to provide a kind of morning-until-night, cradle-to-grave environment. Parish papers, parties, dinners; credit unions, sodalities, veterans' organizations; parish elementary schools and high schools most of all—these *served to create a complete miniature society inside* the larger society, to shield Catholics from community exposure and incidentally to prevent their infusion of witness in the clubs and organizations or schools of the community. It is true that this feature of parish life remains strong and may continue to do so, and that values as well as hazards are implied in the pattern.

But the formal tendency of Catholic parochial life in the past decade has been away from such inversion and sub-community emphasis. The cynic will say, with some truth, that this change is the mere result of social change over which the priest has no control. The community integrates itself, as it were, apart from religious institutions along functional and virtually automatic lines. In a secular society people make up their minds apart from the church. Parishes must content themselves with the tangential aspects of community and must fabricate a world of meaning that has to do with the merely private, familial, and leisured portions of existence. At the same time one must observe in the theology of the new ecumenical era at least the beginnings of encouragement for integration of Catholic life and secular community life at the expense of sub-community status as a positive Christian good.

As in the newer Protestant theological impetus, so in Catholic progressivism, almost any *peritus* who is being

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heeded somehow suggests that the Church exists for the world, that Christian energies are to be infused as a salt or leaven in what were called the secular affairs of men. The non-Catholic is much more likely today to be at the side of the Catholic parishioner on the school board, on the library board, at the City Council, in the symphony subscription drive, in the racial demonstration, than he would have been before the symbolic year 1958. And as they are at each other's side there is probably a different interest visible in each: the Catholic is not there in order to represent the interests of the parish, to see that it gets its slice of the community pie or receives the portions and honors due it. He is there, if he belongs to the self-conscious new apostolate, just as a man or for the sake of the world. And though the numbers of such Catholics may be few, they are perceived by non-Catholics and go into the composite of Catholic parochial formation, in the outsider's view.

There is also a growing sense of common destiny between non-Catholic and Catholic parishioners. It is true that the more alert and socially or culturally conscious of these Christians will not only have more in common with each other than they have socially and culturally with intransigent members of their own communions: some of their freshest and freest allies will not be Christians at all. But the mere fact of a common Christian existence ecumenically understood helps to cut across sectarian lines. Where once upon time it was difficult for non-Catholics to share in the triumphs of Catholic parishes against the demonry that surrounded them, now a shared destiny is perceived. (I will make an allowance for one exception: athletic competition is a realm in which it remains difficult to enjoy someone else's parochial victories.)

The parish has been much put upon by critics of religious life during the past decade. As the most widespread, visible, and most adapted and adaptable cultural form among religious institutions, much criticism was directed to it which should have been pointed to seminaries, boards and bureaus, academics and theologians, who failed to produce or communicate ideas and ideals which could transform parishes. Because of this I have dealt gently with parish existence in these paragraphs, in order to chronicle three kinds of change in the Protestant vision of Catholic parishes. But "going easy" may suggest an unrealism and may contribute to dangerous illusions. Something else and other must be said.

Catholic parishes, like all parishes, are in trouble, in deep trouble. "People no longer live where they live," to use Colin Williams' phrase. Their opinions and their religious attitudes are shaped more often by their political allegiances, economic class, social commitments, by their kinds of employment and by the mass media of communications, than they were by their local parishes in the days of "territorial Catholicism" and natural localism. Yet parishes rarely have understood, adapted to, or anticipated the crisis which has resulted from this change in habit and attitude.

Can one rely on parishes in the future for nurture as Christians have in the past? Do not Catholic parochial practices in many ways contribute to the secularization of decision bewailed in the Catholic pulpit? So long as one meets his religious institutional obligations, it often appears as if he is free to pursue daily life entirely outside the norms of Christian judgment. If he is regular at Mass he seems to be free to be an exploitative slum landlord and to express any kind of racial prejudice he desires. So can Protestants. Protestants, depending as they must more on suasion and less on authority, law or obligation, or sacramental activity, might theoretically be in a better position to shape attitudes though they have not been notably willing to do so or successful at their task. And Catholic parishes do possess a pattern of authority which more easily can effect change—the illustration of school integration by fiat, as it were, demonstrates this point.

Catholic parishes have some unique problems. Ecumenical change and variation in liturgy and personal ethics (discussions of birth control, mixed marriage, etc.) are contributing to a perceived crisis of confidence in the parishes. Yet old-line pre-*aggiornamento* Catholicism is unattractive to the educated Catholics in growing numbers. Catholic schools and their attendant problems tend to dominate non-Catholic visions of parochial life. Support of such schools has tended to impose a parochial church year (Spring Bazaar, Summer Fair, Fall Raffle, Christmas Dance) which obscures the liturgical year.

But for the most part Catholic and non-Catholic parishes share the same crisis. They are marked by the problems of localism; they seem to represent a small idea in the modern world, an obsolete and inefficient way to organize spiritual life. Yet both pastorally and in the integration of parishioners' lives they minister to a variety of needs. They deserve constant scrutiny and await more constructive proposals than they have heard to date.

The fact that people in the South bomb local churches' buildings, that they resent or rejoice in priests' participation in social change, that they are surprisingly faithful at Mass—is a sign that parishes are and can become creative scandals and more than minor participants in churchly renewal and in the world's service.

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Too much dead wood

PARISH ORGANIZATIONS

DORIS GRUMBACH

A story is told of a boy whose large family had just been evicted. A kindly neighbor commiserated with him, saying how sad it must be to have no home to go to. "Oh," replied the boy, "You're wrong. We have a home. We just have no place to put it." The plight of the average American Catholic parishioner is not unlike the boy's. He has a fair amount of good will and eagerness, and a strong sense of his own intellectual needs and lacks (especially in the last three years), but "no place to put it."

Take up a parish bulletin as you enter a church in Ravena, New York. Or Hazleton, Pennsylvania. Or Mason City, Iowa. Read the announcements of coming events in the next week. A Holy Name Smoker where Jack Murphy, reserve pitcher for the St. Louis Cardinals, will "speak," a Catholic Daughters of America installation ceremony, a C.Y.O. Youth Week. The Catholic Boy Scouts will receive their *Ad Altare* awards at . . . The Legion of Mary will . . . This is the week that our school children will be around selling subscriptions to the diocesan paper and every good Catholic family will. . .

Historically, as it has often been pointed out, this variety of parish "life" had an understandable necessity. American society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries excluded Catholics from its social and cultural organizations, so the parish formed its own, often parallel, groups. These were intended to have a central core of spirituality, but in time a heavy layer of irrelevant social activity and ceremony came to be superimposed on them. And they became in many cases a profitable source of income for beleaguered pastors, as well as an edifying, corporate example of spirituality for the non-joining parishioners: "The Holy Name Society will receive Communion together at the eight o'clock Mass."

There is no doubt that these societies served their time and place well. But they were seldom used for educational purposes and as educational centers. Their single unifying characteristic was their ineluctable, absolute Catholic coloration. No one came to their meetings who was not a Catholic; speakers at all their functions had to be clearly certified as model Catholics; it was even better and safer if they were clerical. And in too many parishes even the meager "speaker" angle of the meetings gave way before the allurements of fun, games, and profit. The men and women of the parish became the sponsors of bazaars, cake sales and the weekly Bingo session.

Contentment with this state of parish affairs might have perdured had not renewal become a fact of Catholic life. The comfortably narrow, often sterile, parochial life might have continued undisturbed, and the pastor would have gone on explaining the absence of the dissatisfied, the educated and the professional as signs of their "uppityness," or their flabby faith. The implacable presence of the pastor or one of his assistants at every parish function as "moderators" would have still been necessary because otherwise the laity would surely feel the pastor did not appreciate what "they were doing" for him and the Church.

Aggiornamento has changed all that. The ease of the old ways and the historical necessity for them have both disappeared. If the parish is to continue as a meaningful entity in a Catholic's life (and there are indications that even that organizational institution is not an unchallenged fixture) it must do so on new terms, under entirely reconceived forms.

There is first the immediate future, starting from the adjournment of the Vatican Council. In the next ten years we hope to be watching and assisting in the implementation of schema and decree in every corner of the Catholic world. For most Catholics this will have reality only on the parish level. And it is now certain in light of the Council that the great Catholic need is not social security and inbred warmth in self-contained groups, but adult re-direction, re-education and cultural extension. The Council revitalized and elevated the laity, restored the liturgy to its Judaeo-Christian and *popular* roots, and suggested a move of Catholics out of their cell-like, catacombic existence into the vital communal area of the human family. Parish organizations must somehow adapt themselves to these demands.

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It is entirely possible that the pastor who assures you that "if we *had* good lectures or study groups they wouldn't come" is quite right. There is the danger that the abandonment of the Age of the Smoker, the culture of the fashion show and the Sisters' pantry sale, will leave some parishioners without "a place to come." But other parishioners, who have heretofore only suffered the existence of parish life, might be willing to take an active part in envitalized organizations—parishioners who recognize and welcome the challenge. For these newly conceived organizations, based upon this need to know and grow rather than on social corsetry, will require of priests and laity revolutionary energy and resolve.

The Need to Know

We might start out with a change of *names*. Legions, sodalities, knights, confraternities and holy names, smack of an era when the air of nobility or crusading militarism gave importance to a little society. Simpler names might serve our present objectives better than this suggestion of holy alliances and religious wars. Then, one would hope that in this new era parish organizations will accommodate both sexes in one active unit, and that, as well, age groups now separated would be melded into one larger unit, from draft age to senior citizen. From a re-educational point of view the value of persons of all adult generations and both sexes pursuing the same ends together is obvious.

The new society would be entirely lay with its own advisors, teachers, or leaders, brought in from other neighborhood or regional sources if its own resources do not supply them. Parishes heretofore have made almost no use of their own professional people—its teachers, lawyers, doctors, social workers, etc. The presence of the pastor or his assistants is not really required to reassure the laity. There may be a real point in having the pastor *in attendance* at meetings of such a group as a member of the parish, participating in the re-education process, in partnership with the laity. But in this new role of member, not moderator and final resort, his absence would not be interpreted as fatal to the evening's proceedings.

The aim for such a newly conceived society, with its contributory groups, in co-educational, lay form, would be the cultivation and dissemination of understanding, with a view, ultimately, to the creation of a true Christian community. Logically one group might begin with liturgical studies, another with studies in the field of Christian commitment. In sociology, a group might well consider replacing the carpet-slipper comforts of missionary convert literature and hagiography with James Baldwin, Claude Brown, Michael Harrington, Hannah Arendt, Harvey Cox, and so forth. Modern educational psychology and theory is another area—the Catholic parent and student ought at last to come face to face with Freud, John Dewey, Conant and Rickover as well as critics closer to home in parochial education.

This is the time too, for an active parish group to explore the history of church art and architecture, decoration and sculpture, with an eye to eventual advice and assistance in the improving of church buildings, or the planning of new ones. Too often have these matters rested in the exclusive hands of a harassed and untrained pastor (in these matters the seminary is strangely silent) and the good-Catholic, contractor-parishioner whose training is financially acute but, often, artistically abysmal. An arm of the Liturgical Arts Society or the Catholic Art Association might well reach out to help this group to educate itself.

Literature—ancient and modern—offers several possibilities. It is now quite practicable to form a parish library of cheap, excellent paperbacks. A small, interested group might use this literature to consider the modern heretics as well as the saints, the Joyces and the Camus', as well as Faulkner, Mann, Malraux, Shaw, Williams and Beckett, Ionesco and Genet, and those closer to home base yet often elliptical in intent: F. Mauriac, G. Greene, E. Waugh, F. O'Connor. It might explore modern philosophy, by way of Tillich, Heidegger, Bertrand Russell, Marcel, Teilhard de Chardin.

In cities where art films are available a group interested in the history and technique of film might meet in post-viewing sessions to discuss Fellini, de Sica, Bergman, etc., and the current problems involved in censorship. Music is another much uncultivated field. Some technical instruction in listening to music might well help the Church to approach its current music problems. And finally, the modern Catholic's view of himself as citizen must also be part of his re-education. A commitment to social justice and human rights, too often neglected in the past, can be developed in parish groups. The Catholic is often too old for school—he must be re-educated by his Church.

Of course parish organizations are not the only avenues for the re-education or continuing education of the laity. Consider something as simple as the parish bulletin referred to at the beginning of this piece. Most pastors have abdicated this opportunity to contact the minds of their parishioners directly and allowed various well-intentioned national printers to use this space. What reaches their parishioners is a series of distantly conceived and abstractly written essays on moral or

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religious matters, sometimes in embarrassing contradiction to what is actually going on in their parish. (One parish bulletin which described in detail the significance of recent liturgical changes was distributed in a diocese where these changes are forbidden.) This space might well be used to document or explore the sermon of the day, or to discuss some critical matter in the life of the parish. It is an educational tool in the hands of a guaranteed readership; it is rarely so used.

Or take the pamphlet rack at the back of the Church, its titles usually redolent of your childhood: "Steps to a Better Confession," "Avoiding the Occasions of Sin," "How to Tell if You Have a Vocation." The titles are restricted to what can be ordered handily from a catalogue; the little pamphlets become yellowed and dusty, the rack takes up space in the back of the church as a space-consuming artifact. The pastor together with a literature group might well use the space for dissemination of a few selected publications bearing on the subject of the week's sermon; these would then be changed to serve the continuing, educational needs of the next week and the next subject.

What we are suggesting is that a greater part of parish life in this transitional phase be culturally oriented to close the conspicuous gap between the Catholic and the extra-Catholic community. The absence in parish life of any cultural activity—excepting Christmas performances of "The Little Star of Bethlehem"—must be overcome; the parish society must become a transmitter of general culture both to its members and to the community at large.

Which brings us by natural means to the ultimate shape of the parish organization. It would seem only sensible that its proximate, cultural uses would someday give way to its ultimate dissolution. This would be especially true of an active, useful group which too often, even in its re-vitalized form, will be found to duplicate and parallel others in the outside community.

A first step in the dissolution will be to amalgamate with other similar groups in the diocese—intra-parochially, much as the CCD is organized now and as the CFM has been organized. The final step will be the union of parochial organization with city or regional groups which share the same objectives. There seems to be very little *raison d'être* for a Legion of Mary which does not visit *all* the sick and needy, of whatever faith, in its area, or for a parish branch of the St. Vincent de Paul society when a city already contains a parallel functioning group that might be enriched by the entry into its ranks of active Catholics.

A parochial-school Mothers Club ought properly, it would seem to me, to seek out opportunities to ally itself with a State PTA. (An official of the New York State Congress of Parents and Teachers has assured me that there is nothing in national or state PTA by-laws or constitution to prevent this). Membership in this wider sphere of educational activity would enrich and extend parochial school life and the content of these meetings and perhaps dispel the "private," "our school," monolithic sense that the administration so often bestows upon all the functions of Catholic schools. It would also be heartening to find Catholics moving into civic organizations like the League of Women Voters, Neighborhood Rehabilitation groups, the interracial councils, amateur dramatic groups, etc. The aim might be self-enrichment, but ultimately it would result in community assistance and so a new dimension to their faith.

That there are movements now in this direction is evident in a number of places. Recently the Most Reverend Francis J. Schenk, Bishop of Duluth, helped to dedicate the new YMCA building in that city and, "following changes that have taken place in both the Catholic Church and in the Protestant-sponsored YMCA," the New York *Times* reported, the Bishop then declared that Roman Catholics are now urged to joint the Y. "I am happy that this obstacle to closer community relations has been removed. This agreement will result in a closer bond between members of all faiths and will enable religion to have a greater influence upon the entire community."

The Catholic must reflect the demands upon him of *aggiornamento* and ecumenism, which is to say, he must become extra-parochial in his life and in his thinking. He must discard his inherited tendency to preface all his social activity with the word "Catholic" and so to circumscribe his sphere of interest and influence. (In our town, for example, despite the existence of an active Interracial Council we saw formed recently a *Catholic* Interracial Council, of great good-will and action, it is true, but in the main duplicating the activities of the older group, the one's existence diminishing the force of the other. We have as well a *Catholic* Doctors' Guild, a *Catholic* Lawyer's Guild and even, a *Catholic* Teachers organization, the Aquinas Guild, all of which, by their very titles, cut them away from the main body of their professions.)

He must, in short, discover that the place to put his faith is no longer exclusively within the confines of his own being, or within the geographical lines that define his parish, but everywhere outside that will receive it and can contain it. He must seek to enter such places. They will become, to misuse an old hotel advertisement, his home away from home.

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Civic involvement

FACING OUTWARD

MICHAEL E. SCHILTZ

It requires a considerable sense of humor to consider the recent history of parochial immersion in neighborhood controversy; for in that history is writ large an essentially absurd paradox: the more the layman presses for his parish to become "involved" in the community, the more he reenforces the political activity of his clergy.

If one happens to be an emerging layman, both jealous of his prerogatives and convinced that the Church is All Too Irrelevant, one is apt to become schizophrenic about this state of affairs in the absence of a well-cultivated sense of comic proportion. Essentially, the problem is two-fold: first, given the present state of canonical parochial organization, it is impossible for anyone to represent the Catholic residents of parochial space in any meaningful sense. Second, given the same present state of things, the only human reality which can be meaningfully associated with the parish is the personage which canon law defines rather precisely as "the pastor of the place."

All this is to propose that while the parish, as parish, simply cannot be involved in community controversies, at the same time the pastor can be involved, and perhaps ought to be, but for reasons rather removed from the moral imperatives of the Church's prophetic mission.

At the outset, it should be noted that while this proposition may seem, in the light of Vatican II, to be an advanced form of ecclesiological regression, it is simply an assessment based upon the reality of things as they are. Whether the parish, and its present incapacity for involvement, should be "other," is a matter not under discussion here. The question is whether the Catholic parish, as a particular manifestation of the People of God, should—or can—become involved in controversial, prudential public policy questions, either directly or through the medium of a neighborhood organization.

The key concept is involvement as parish qua parish. There is no question that the citizen-Believer, who is by definition a member of a parish somewhere, ought to be involved to the limits of his capacity in the affairs of the common weal; and there is no question that this obligation, generally phrased, is a moral obligation which cries for support from the structure of the Christian community. But how does a parish, qua parish, become involved in community controversy? In theory, this can take place in one of two ways: first, through some agent duly designated, the community of Christians may "take a stand" on a given issue; and secondly, the personal and tangible resources of the parish may be committed to a struggle as an expression-in-action of that stand.

Implicit in these two forms of involvement is the notion of consensus. Before it is valid to say that the People of God who reside within a given area which makes up a Catholic parish are actually "taking a stand" or committing resources, it must be demonstrated that either of these two forms of expression actually involves the consent of the parishioners. In practice, there is no way in which such a consensus can be reached or alleged.

Difficulties

The Catholic is not in any relevant sense a member of a Catholic parish "of his free will." Once the individual accepts the Catholic community's invitation to Baptism—in itself a free act—he accepts likewise the territorial structure of the parish. He cannot withdraw from the parish community (if, indeed, it is a community at all), because his membership in a particular parish is defined for him by his Baptism and his residential address. This single fact of Catholic ecclesiology—which essentially differentiates the Catholic parish from most other denominational congregations—raises two wellnigh insuperable obstacles to the discovery of consensus.

First, the mandatory structure of the Catholic parish means that the individual parishioner does not have available to him the one mechanism which gives legitimacy to the "consensus" expression of most voluntary organizations in our society: the ability of the members to withdraw. In our complex and fast-moving society, relevant stands are contingent upon the ability of an

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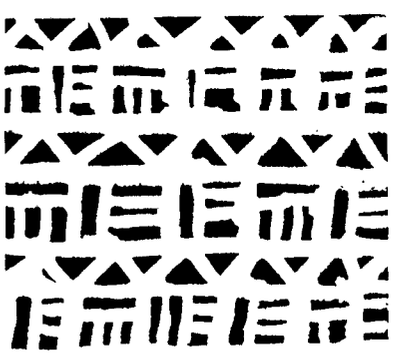
organization's executive to devise postures with the changing nuances of a situation; effective policy-by-referendum or other "direct democracy" forms is too awkward; and thus the voluntary organization's executive enjoys a wide latitude for judgment, but it is a judgment which is circumscribed by his reading of the consensus of the members; if he "goes too far," he will lose his members. No such mechanism for restraining the parish representatives, and thus "legitimizing" "consensus," is available in the Catholic system.

It might be argued that, however awkward it might be, some standing mechanism of parochial referendum or other direct-participation structure could be set up, in which all parishioners would have the opportunity to cast their voice toward the assumption of parochial postures. While not as flexible as voluntary organizations with an executive free to act within a "withdrawal of consent" framework, would not such an "umbrella" parish organization truly meet standards of representation?

Here is involved the second of the obstacles to consensus posed by the mandatory structure of the membership in a Catholic parish. The existence of such an umbrella organization, claiming to represent the consensus of the parishioners, must necessarily involve a



fundamental theological assumption entirely foreign to Catholic tradition: that Christ's invitation to membership in the Christian community is coextensive in the body politic.

It is axiomatic in democratic political thought that no one within a body politic can abstain from its deliberations; that failure to vote is in itself the expression of a political position. Thus, to establish an "umbrella" organization representative of a Catholic parish is to argue that everyone in that parish must be represented, either by voting or failing to vote; and it is thus to argue that the Catholic, in accepting Baptism, is accepting the commitment to express himself politically through one particular form of social involvement: the parish. On its face it would seem difficult to defend this assumption as part of the Deposit of Faith.

Given the rather primitive state of serious discussions relating both to the contemporary parish and to the role of the ecclesiastical structure in a pluralistic society, these arguments must surely be tentative. But, noting that limitation, it seems safe to assert that there are valid reasons to argue that the Catholic parish, precisely because of the involuntary nature of its membership, cannot as parish participate in the public forum at all.

If there seems to be no theoretical basis for a genuine participation of parish Christians in community activities through the medium of parish qua parish, how then explain the abundant evidence over the past decade of apparent parochial involvement in community controversy? Why are community organizers so eager to engage the support of the Catholic parishes?

The community organizer does not seek out the parish; he seeks out the pastor; and he seeks out the pastor because the pastor has at his command the disposition of relatively large sums of money, the personal use of relatively strategic physical facilities, the control of a comparatively complex parish communications network, and the loyalty of a cadre of community residents upon whom he may be presumed to have significant influence —all of which assets may be enlisted to the cause through negotiations with one man. What community organizers seek to involve is the power and personality of the Catholic pastor—not the body of Christians qua body who are his parishioners.

The question then rephrases itself: under what conditions should a pastor become involved in community controversies? It is patent from the earlier section of this discussion that the pastor does not have the right to represent parishioners qua parishioners in secular affairs at least for the same reason that no one else has that right: they cannot be represented at all. Whom, then, does the pastor represent? On whose behalf does he act? He acts simply and solely on behalf of ecclesiastical properties and as an administrator of a complex of ecclesiastical service institutions.

As the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. is presently organized, the pastor shares with the bishop—but not with the parishioners—the total and absolute responsibility for a complex of real estate and chattels. The right of the ecclesiastical bureaucracy to own and dispose of these properties in perpetuity and to administer the institutions which they support is implicit in the assent of Faith of the American Catholic—it is part of the ecclesiastical system to which he pledges fealty. One may argue the merits of the system, but it is a reality. Judged in that light, the pastor has not only a right but

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an obligation to represent his property and administrative interests to the community at large and in community organizations, and to dispose of funds for that purpose at his discretion. In doing so, the pastor represents himself and his Bishop, and not the parishioners of his parish.

Perhaps the most striking implication of the foregoing analysis is that there is no room for consideration of the moral relevance of pastoral participation in community affairs. Ought not the pastor commit his funds and his resources to community controversies which have clear moral overtones, if not mandates? Is not the pastor bound to support community activities oriented toward racial tolerance and stable residential integration? Is not the pastor bound to support community activities which impose a brake upon arbitrary decision-making by urban renewal authorities and upon the consequent disintegration of a residential community and the serious trauma of residential relocation?

No Right to Intervene

I would argue that not only is he not bound to intervene in these situations, but that in all probability he has no right to intervene, if his intervention is based upon strictly moral grounds. The reason is that very few concrete community situations present themselves in terms of clear-cut moral alternatives. Usually the choice, and the community conflict, is between alternative paths to the same objective, or between alternative but mutually exclusive dispositions of a single municipal benefice; and this pattern of alternatives lies within the prudential, secular political dimension.

Thus, for example, it would seem to be perfectly legitimate for a pastor to intervene in opposition to the routing of an expressway through his parish, if the grounds of his opposition is that the elimination of housing along the site would deprive him of substantial parish revenues, or if the grounds of his opposition is that the route would destroy access to his parochial school. On the other hand, it does not seem a proper exercise of pastoral prerogatives for a pastor to intervene in the same case on the grounds that the rights of ownership of his parishioners are being threatened. In the former case, the pastor is proceeding from property and administrative interests; in the latter case, he is proceeding along moral grounds in a situation in which the balancing of rights of one segment of the community against the other is the salient question.

These limitations upon the right of the pastor to intervene in the deliberations of the community should not be confused with the pastor's obligation to intervene in the conduct of his parishioners. Thus, where overt acts of racial discrimination, violence, or other bestiality are at issue, the pastor may well have the obligation to caution his parishioners to desist or withdraw from the Christian community. But here the pastor speaks as shepherd to flock, not as parish to community.

The lines between these two paths of intervention are not as clear as abstract rational analysis may suggest; and in practice the boundary will continue to be, as it has been in the past, the subject of intensive, often contentious debate. This is particularly true under one set of special circumstances, in severely impoverished neighborhoods and less often now in foreign-language neighborhoods, where the pastor may be the natural "political" as well as religious leader, actively identified with community residents in their struggle for justice, opportunity, and recognition. In this situation the pastor takes on the prerogatives and obligations of a civic radical quite apart from his role as a cleric. In assuming this role, the pastor's allegiance and "power base" lies precisely in whatever segment of the neighborhood will recognize him as its leader; it is in a very real sense utterly apart from his management of the parish.

If bureaucratic self-interest, albeit enlightened, emerges as the basic validating motive for the engagement of the Catholic pastor in community controversy, and if genuine community participation on the part of Catholics through their parish is impossible, this should not deter Catholics from participating in community activities. In an age in which the only prerequisite for an organization is access to a duplicating machine, the Catholic has no need to turn to his parish either for an opportunity for community action or for an opportunity to provide Christian witness to that action. If the community really needs the participation of a patently Catholic organization (and it is possible to imagine circumstances in which it does), let one be organized—but outside the framework of the parish, independent of the financial resources of the parish (and consequently, independent of the pastor's otherwise absolute authority over and identification with an organization), and free to act responsively according to the laws which govern voluntary associations in our society.

Defined to correspond to the most unstable of natural communities—the residential neighborhood; organized with a structure utterly distasteful to the spirit of the age; and administered as if it were one of the competing sections in a large diocesan department store, the contemporary parish is totally unfitted to cope with the problems of neighborhood decision-making. We should stop pretending that it does.

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"Make me answerable"

IN THE INNER CITY

DANIEL J. MALLETTE

A long time ago, a man named Paul wrote a letter to another man named Philemon. The letter was written from a jail and it concerned mainly a third man named Onesimus. This third man was a runaway slave who once belonged to Philemon; cynically, his name in Greek meant "profitable." The letter providentially found its way into the canon of the New Testament. Unlike the other recorded letters of Paul, this one is short on lengthy theologizing. It is the confused letter of an old man in jail, sometimes cajoling, sometimes threatening, and in a real sense compromising a clear idea in a real life situation. Paul is sending Onesimus back. He doesn't want to send him back, but he is sending him back because he and Onesimus are acting freely, and he tells Philemon that he wants Philemon's generosity to "be exercised freely, not from lack of choice."

What Paul says in the letter, whether or not we agree with the correctness of his choice of action and advice to Onesimus, has a great deal of relevance to the committed Christian who serves organized religion in the inner city, pessimistically but honestly termed by John Harmon as "the urban death camp." The secular power of organized religion is mainly white middle-class at this point in American history. When a priest goes to court to aid some person in trouble with the law, when he acts as an " ombudsman," like Father Henry Browne of Stryker's Bay, N.Y., or his hundreds of Protestant and Catholic counterparts, the influence and power that he wields is white, middle-class power. St. Paul was attempting to wield power with his letter; whether he succeeded or not, history doesn't tell, but the base of his power is the fact that he held a hero's position in the Church to which Philemon adhered.

On the other hand, Paul obviously held a very valid relationship with respect to Onesimus. Here he was able by advice alone to get Onesimus to return, to convince him that it would be better to face up to the situation and change it, for himself, but more so for Philemon and perhaps the other people held in slavery by all the Philemons in the world. Paul had given Onesimus the Christian message, the fact that Jesus has indeed risen from the dead and made all men free and brothers. The message convinced Onesimus, I am sure, only because Paul was so convinced of this idea that he himself was freely a prisoner, had borne perhaps more sufferings and risks than Onesimus had. Paul had gone beyond the point of no return. He was an old man, and he couldn't decide to forget the Onesimuses and retire to the Philemons even if he wanted to.

This same confusing situation confronts the Christian Church in the inner city today. When somebody complains that we offer no plan, no so-called goals, but seem to be haphazardly running here and there, I am consoled by the confusion of St. Paul. Christianity is not a plan. Christianity is an idea, one to be planted in men's minds and hearts, and to be trusted. A suburban parish might be able to lay out a plan, of where the buildings will be ten years from now, of where the money thermometer posted outside the church should head at the end of the building drive. But if St. Paul spent his time in prison laying out goals for the organization in terms of buildings and numbers, he would have lost sight of the idea that brought him into prison in the first place. If he made everything dependent on maintaining his hold on Philemon, keeping him in the organization, the whole movement would have lost its validity. Paul was probably wrong in the particular course of action he followed, but he was right in his spirit. He sent Onesimus back, but he insisted that it be not as a slave, but as a well-loved brother.

Now at risk of drawing too much on the parallel, I would suggest that organized religion in the city today is doing a good job in sending Onesimus back, but not enough of being a prisoner, as Paul had to be before he could honestly expect the reconciliation he desired. When somebody asks what is the Church doing about the urban poor, the reply is generally to list the fine schools, the dedicated sisters and priests, the tutorial programs, the case-work approaches. Too seldom is the question asked about the city as a whole. Organized religion has a great deal of money and manpower

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wrapped up in the inner cities. But the real question must be raised about a city like Chicago: how did it happen that here, where the Catholic Church is perhaps the number one force in the lives of almost a majority of the citizens, so little progress has been made in making real the brotherhood of all men, in housing and employment and education and legal justice?

A Prisoner, Not a Warden

The servant of the Church in the city must first of all be a prisoner, not a warden. Often, the parishes become like missionary compounds; their success is judged on how well they emulate the numbers and financial solvency of parishes in more affluent areas. We start from the premise that the Church and the buildings are here, and boast of the fact that we did not run when the original groups who lived here left. The premise to start from is the premise of Paul, that Jesus Christ really rose from the dead, and that all men are redeemed and brothers. Starting from that as a premise, the goal of religion is to do everything possible to make this fact evident to all the people of the city. Then perhaps the buildings can be used to help attain this goal. Or perhaps the buildings should be torn down or new buildings built. The important step is to really believe in the theological fact so that we don't get bound up in perpetuating something just because it happens to exist. When northern cities saw huge increases in their Negro population, some parishes turned into morgues, while others came alive because of interested Christians. One tragic fact is that the creation of "morgues" is still going on.

New ideas should constantly be tried. Cardinal Meyer and Bishop O'Donnell have given us an opportunity here at St. Agatha's to operate as a team precisely to seek new ways of making the institution of our parish more meaningful to more people. Ideas can be brought forth and tried, and the institution does not have to be built around authoritarian decrees of a traditional pastor. The idea is in line with the spirit of collegiality somewhat articulated at the Second Vatican Council. Three young men share an apartment two doors down from the rectory. Two are Extension volunteers giving a year of service, the other a young man from the community. They run the gym, work at all kinds of youth activities, get involved in the constant crises of the poor who otherwise would have nowhere to turn. The regular school operates each day with 450 pupils and then at night hundreds of seminarians and college students come to work on tutoring programs administered by Calm (Chicago Area Lay Movement) for the 10,000 public school children of grammar school age who live in the vicinity. The Sisters, besides vigorously administering the parochial school, are involved actively in the problems of the poor. They sent the eighth grade nun to Selma that first week and are a visible presence in the community. These things are being done here and in scores of parishes throughout the country. But in a real sense these are programs of applying "band-aids to gaping wounds." This is a good and Christian thing to do, but one is criminally negligent if he does not at the same time cry out with all his might for an ambulance and the things necessary to heal the wound effectively. Paul did well to try to effect a reconciliation between two men, but he would have been a failure if he did not speak out plainly against the wrongness of the situation of slavery.

Involvement with the Poor

We need a crash program in involvement, real "guts involvement" in the affairs of the poor. And we cannot do that unless the priests and sisters and all the others serving the institution are really poor themselves. Only by his own sufferings could Paul sufficiently express in his own way the fact that all men are free. A priest can spend eight years running around in moments of crisis to get care for people injured by accidents and disease, and then he can speak from life experience of his own about the absolute need for socialized medicine in this country, across the board. If Bishops and priests and sisters and respected and titled doctors went through one night of being shunted from a religious hospital to the interminable waits at Cook County Hospital, the pressure of public opinion to change this uncivilized situation would be overwhelming. What a tremendous witness it would be to the fact that there is a resurrection to see a diocese go bankrupt, not because it overextended itself in building new rectories and churches, but because it purged itself of every vestige of discrimination, because it spoke out on civil rights and world peace, and thereby alienated the wealthy who presently find the Church so comfortable.

The most beautiful Catholic Church I have ever seen is a weak frame building in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Its outside back wall had a huge charred section because the social center that had been there was burnt to the ground by Mississippi murderers. In other towns, the Catholic school is often an attractive little brick structure in the midst of the poverty of the Negro section of the town, that gives the children who attend it a better education than they would receive in the public schools. This is somewhat true at least as far

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as the quality of education goes in the North also. But I sensed in the South, in the voices and faces of the youngsters as they hung around the broken down frame houses that were Freedom Schools, that there was a gnawing hunger for something more than a knowledge of how to read and write and sew and type. People want to be free. Onesimus wanted freedom, and Paul worked to win it, and at the same time won freedom for the Church itself.

In "Blues for Mr. Charlie," James Baldwin has the State question the preacher whose son was murdered: "And you raised your son according to the precepts of the Christian Church?" The preacher Meridian replies: "I tried. But both my son and I had profound reservations concerning the behavior of Christians. He wondered why they treated black people as they do. And I was unable to give him a satisfactory answer."

The time ran out for the protagonist in Baldwin's play. Organized Christianity never gave him a satisfactory answer. Now, concretely, what I think has to happen is that we have to respond to Onesimus and not Philemon. Our churches cannot stand aloof from the major issues of the people cut off from freedom. It seems to me that eventually the priest-worker idea has to be put into practice. The priest in a rectory can serve in a primary way the middle-class or the aspirant middle-class who seek out the parochial school; but only a priest in an apartment, sharing joys and miseries, can bring the good news primarily to the people at the bottom of the economic ladder. Only in prison, did Paul convince Onesimus. The great handicap of our Church here and now is the lack of vocations from minority groups. To overcome that the seminaries must be geared effectively to recruiting and nurturing vocations from people who are poor, or people who are different from the white middle-class youngsters that now populate the seminaries. At the same time, the priests who serve the poor must reach out effectively to be identified.

Being Open to Risks

Christ came, as did the prophets of the Old Testament, to work a change, especially one affecting the poor, that the poor might have the good news preached to them. He accomplished His mission by becoming one of us. If the Church as we know it is to become identified with the poor, then it must be open to ideas and real risks. We cannot be involved with tutoring programs or with statements about full employment and then not take part in the struggles to change the educational systems that leave our children half educated, and out of school, ready to be shipped off to fight and die in Vietnam and Santo Domingo for a cause we don't really understand. We cannot withdraw from a selective buying program because the object of the boycott is some powerful benefactor of our Church. Paul spread the ideas of Jesus Christ. Jesus talked the same way in Jerusalem as he did at Nazareth. A priest of the poor should speak the same way in the suburbs as he would in the city, the same at the chanceries as he does in his own rectory.

No place more than in the inner city does ecumenism have validity. Here it is not the polite, well-worded ecumenism of hotel meetings and luncheons, but it is Baptist ministers, and Presbyterians and Catholics, facing up to the issues that are driving the young people of our inner cities to useless, valueless existences. No more can we operate Churches with a hook out for converts. We must show the way that Christianity will have no relevance at all in the face of Godlessness if the things we do are to pull in numbers for our churches. I recall the wee hours of a night in Montgomery looking into the tired face of Monsignor Owen Scanlon of New York as we stood with a group of 30 ministers and priests attempting to pray on the capitol steps. I thought that here and now at this place, this tired monsignor standing here with the rest of us is more beautiful than all the crimson robes in our sacristies.

One Negro Catholic died in Mississippi. His name was James Chaney. One report said his bones were so pulverized that the doctor who examined his corpse dug up from under that dam said only in high speed accidents like airplane crashes had he ever seen a body so broken. Chaney, according to some reports, had drifted away from the religious practice of Mass and the sacraments. All over this world poor men and women will share in this alienation from religion that is willing to get involved, but only "so far."

Paul ended his letter to Philemon saying "I hope to be restored to you." Paul like Jesus was an optimist. To be Christian is to be an optimist. Paul had faith and trust in the Word that men will be reconciled. Despite the fact that our cities are urban death camps, despite the fact that young people are torturing and killing each other in senseless wars, despite the fact that poverty, galling poverty, exists in a world of affluence, there are glimpses of light. More than any other force in the world, more than Communism, organized religion has the power to reconcile Onesimus and Philemon, never as slave and master, but as true brothers. The late Archbishop of this city, Cardinal Meyer, whose mind was open to ideas and who was

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so untimely removed from the scene, said it this way: "To make the Church better fitted to deliver its message of truth and salvation to the modern world no better beginning can be made than to exemplify anew what was said in this very beginning of the Church: 'See how these Christians love one another.'"

History never told us how things worked out between Onesimus and Philemon, whether Philemon put Onesimus in chains, or killed him, or whether Onesimus eventually killed Philemon, or whether they really were restored to one another as brothers. But the letter does tell us that Paul loved both of them. The Church in the city must be true in its love to both sides, not in words, not at the expense of hiding the truth, but trusting the word of Jesus Christ, that makes us free, true brothers for all eternity.

Preaching the Word

THE PARISH AS EDUCATOR

GERARD S. SLOYAN

At the national congress of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine held in Chicago in 1951 I took part in a program on adult education. There were three speakers, a layman, another priest, and I. My two platform-mates spoke about study clubs. I spoke about preaching. It was like introducing a skunk at a garden party. I recall to this day the disdain with which my remarks were greeted by the audience, all of them study-club buffs. For them the pulpit was a proven menace.

The low efficiency of the pulpit is not a new phenomenon. St. John Chrysostom as early as the fifth century lamented that no one held the preacher in honor any more. Bishop Dupanloup said ironically more than one hundred years ago: "Thirty-thousand sermons every Sunday in the churches of France—and France still has the faith!" Despite this jaundiced view, religious sociologists of the same post-Napoleonic France do not hesitate to say that the faith survived in the last century in districts and parishes where the people were evangelized. It died where the sermon was not heard.

There is a sense in which the total work of renewal in the Church depends on the quality of public reading and preaching in the decades ahead. The worship act of Christians is something intelligible to them. There are elements in the rites which appeal to man's sense of the numinous, but the Christian also possesses a comprehensible Word which interprets the symbolic or ritual behavior he engages in. Sacraments are a presence of God, a presence of Christ, but it is a real presence only when the sacraments are made meaningful by an intelligible Word.

Protestant Christians observe that their tradition has suffered from a too great concern with worship as intelligible; two possible outcomes of this are bibliolatry and rationalism. Catholics and Orthodox on the other hand have been burdened by the sacred sign which went uninterpreted by the living Word; this has resulted in legalism and holy commerce. The balance lies in an encompassing Word of God that comes to man in both speech and sign, deed and word, contemplation and act. This Word will be spoken only when there is a widespread parish liturgy in which Christ continues to be the speaker from the pulpit once the holy books are closed.

The situation at the moment does not closely resemble this. A review of the realities in the case can be painful. Preachers employ a language a world apart from their ordinary vocabularies. They denounce evils they do not experience and exhort to devotions they do not practice. Quite literally they "do not know what to preach about" and end by embarrassing the people at great length with their embarrassment. The reasons are many. Ignorance of the inspired Scriptures is one, the jejune character of the present lectionary another, lack of acquaintance with people's lives still a third. To these must be added the hard discipline imposed by preparing a thoughtful comment on God's Word so as to make it a continuation of His Word. Skill at multiplying words has always been the enemy of the Word. Human power disarms divine weakness. The result is the coherent babbling one associates with attendance at church.

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Students of the theology of preaching distinguish between evangelization which proclaims and calls to faith, catechesis which clarifies the implications of faith, and the homily which stirs up the faith infused at baptism. In this threefold distinction the direct aim of catechesis is instruction. The proper site for such initiation into Christian mystery is the school. Catechesis requires prayer if it is to succeed. The primary goal of the homily, on the other hand, is more intense prayer. The theological virtues cannot be practiced without intellectual consent, of course, but the bias of the homily is toward affectivity, not intellect.

If catechesis is aimed at instructing, at forming the intellect in a Christian way of thinking, the homily's aim is to move the will to live according to the demands of the new life of the baptized. Domenico Grasso writes in *Proclaiming God's Message* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1965): "Catechesis is calm and static, whereas the homily is more dynamic and disturbing. This explains the dangers to which the two forms of preaching are exposed. Catechesis risks falling into the abstruse, the abstract, the erudite, the polemical—all of which are defects of the intellect. The homily, on the other hand, easily descends to the rhetorical, or gets oversentimental and moralistic—defects of the will and emotions."

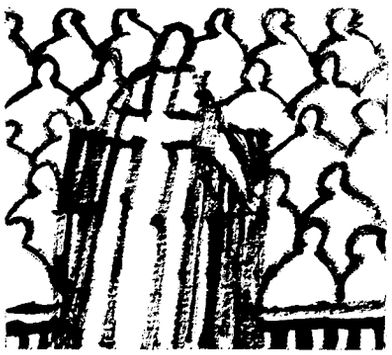
The place of evangelization in the above scheme is that long after the gospel, namely the tidings of Christ's death and resurrection and of ours in Him, have been brought to those who did not upon first hearing them, believe, they form the core of systematic catechesis or "the more lyrical and vivacious" homily.

Discouraging Symmetry

This distinction, neat as it is, is also discouraging from a number of points of view. It seems to sanction the classroom as the *locus* of intelligence with respect to the mysteries and the pulpit as the place of appeals to the will act. But this distinction is so firmly fixed in Catholic consciousness already and so distressing in its effects in both places that it scarcely requires theological support.

Pastoral theologians like Grasso have no intention of letting their theory work against the real needs of real people, however. If parishioners have reached adulthood uninstructed and are still coming to Sunday Mass, they simply must be taught or catechized from the pulpit This does not necessarily mean a return to infantilism—extended discourses on the dim view of tea leaves taken by the first commandment, and so on. Pulpit catechesis need not be as grim as it tends to be. It is the sermon outlines of theological journeymen which have made it so, not any inner necessity. Preaching at Mass can be intelligently instructive; as such it is almost guaranteed to be interesting.

Some medieval synods required the exposition of the Our Father and the Apostles' Creed by the clergy as often as four times a year. The Catechism of the Council of Trent provided an appendix in which the materials it contains are distributed over the Sundays of the year in relation to the texts of the epistles and the gospels. The endless scheme of talks on the creed, the commandments, and the sacraments in a three-year cycle is a remnant of those days of widespread religious illiteracy. It was almost necessitated by the severely limited character of the scripture readings at Mass. Ignorance of the Church's faith will always be with us, but it is not so widespread in our day as at the time of Trent—thanks to the fairly adequate catechizing of our young people. This ignorance need no longer be assumed as the normal adult condition, though it will always characterize certain populations at certain times.



The presumption of readiness for richer pulpit fare is all the more reasonable because of the efforts which go forward in parish schools and schools of religion. The exhortations contained in *Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishop in the Church* decree of Vatican II (October 28, 1965) correspond to already existing realities, by and large: "The bishops should present Christian doctrine in a manner adapted to the needs of the times . . . With a special attention they should attend upon the poor and the lower classes . . . They should strive to make use of the various media at hand nowadays for proclaiming Christian doctrine, namely first of all preaching and catechetical instruction [note the distinction] which always hold first place, then the presentation of this doctrine in schools, academies, conferences, and meetings of every kind." (Art. 13) The bishops are further reminded to make catechetical instruction a "vital, explicit, and effective force in people's lives." (Art. 14) Pastors must "preach God's word to

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all Christians so that . . . as a Christian community they will bear witness to that charity which the Lord commended. It is also the duty of pastors to bring the faithful to a full knowledge of the mystery of salvation through a catechetical instruction which is consonant with the age of the individual . . . They should pay special attention to adolescents and youth." (Art. 30) The celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is named in this context as the center and culmination of the whole life of the Christian community. Intelligent and active participation in the liturgy—a rich sacramental life—is given the primacy in the entire pastoral effort.

An important detail is the encouragement given to institutes and special meetings sponsored by bishops for the clergy respecting the renewal of their spiritual lives and "the acquisition of deeper subjects, especially sacred scripture and theology, the more important social questions, and new methods of pastoral activity." (Art. 16) Nowadays even the ordinary parishioner can sense a spirit of defeat in some of his parish priests through their random remarks from the pulpit—or at times tirades—about change. The disadvantaged condition of the clergy for whom no new formal educational channels were being opened up has been evident. Almost equally clear to the observant onlooker, particularly the active parishioner or non-clerical religious educator, has been the unfortunate situation of the priest who was keeping abreast of such studies without benefit of the affirmative sanction provided by the Council. It has seldom profited anyone to be a prophet on a wrong time schedule; but now some watches have been synchronized.

The above considerations will inevitably benefit the whole Church and the cultures in which it exists. Religious educators will know the difference in a special way once priests begin to feel at ease in the face of progress being made in the sacred sciences. Furthermore, the pulpit, always potentially the "coward's castle" or epicenter of whatever storms happen to be raging, will come to resemble more the mount from which the Lord enunciated the terms of beatitude, justice, and peace.

Summer institutes in a variety of disciplines, chiefly Bible study and catechetics, have been a feature of U.S. and Canadian life for the last five years. Parish clergy have been attending them in considerable numbers. In some dioceses the opportunity has been given to attend such sessions, one and two weeks long, on "company time," the bishop proposing a matching scheme of personal and parish funds to meet the expenses of those who wished to take part. The greater number of priests still attend them as a private venture using their own cash, though the Council's statement in Article 16 may modify this situation considerably.

Perhaps the most serious attack on the problem which has come to this writer's attention is the year-long schedule of weekly sessions involving the priests of the Archdiocese of New York who are in their twenty-ninth and thirtieth years of priesthood. Attendance is voluntary and no positive or negative sanctions have been spoken of. The scheme is now in its second year.

Some of the Catholic military chaplains' corps have likewise been conducting seminars in theology and pastoral care.

Some dioceses like St. Paul are using their seminaries for educative purposes for the clergy via lectures for an admission fee, the ultimate proof of seriousness. Perhaps the most extensive program of priestly training being carried on currently is the Chicago Archdiocesan Liturgy Training Program directed by the Rev. Theodore C. Stone. The city is divided into seven areas and the clergy are meeting regularly in fifty distinct centers. Another effort, serious but not so ambitious, is that of the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Inevitable Tensions

It is necessary to stress the opportunities available to the clergy for growth as preachers and teachers if the parish is to fulfill its educative function. Life can be hard on those who teach in Catholic schools and catechists in schools of religion—it can be hard on assistant pastors—if certain convictions on the importance of the work of religious education are not held from the top down. Besides conviction there must be correct knowledge, so that the partners in a joint venture will not be working at cross-purposes. In today's world a young religious or lay teacher may easily have a better theological education from recent college experience than that which was available to the priest ordained five or ten years. Tensions are inevitable in this situation. The difficulties are heightened when lay people find themselves party to similar crossfire.

It would be wrong to give the impression that formation of religious educators at all levels is going ahead at top speed. The catechist in Catholic elementary or secondary schools who holds a master's degree—the normal professional degree of teachers—in sacred studies or religious pedagogy is still a rarity. The need to be prepared in other subjects is the chief reason for this, plus the notion which hangs on with fierce tenacity that "anyone can teach religion." Even the many administrators who no longer think in such terms

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tend to place an inordinately high value on a ten-day institute or a summer of study. Actually these investments of time will yield a result commensurate with that in math or English for one who has had a few courses in them in college. The very novelty of the procedure tends to claim for such efforts an effectiveness they cannot possibly possess. The whole summer-school thrust in sacred studies is, paradoxically, the greatest enemy to serious attention to the question. It gives the appearance of professionalism, and so long as it continues to do so the unprepared status of religion teachers will continue to flourish.

Not many Catholic educators (just as a matter of record) are proposing that Catholic schools be phased out. The prevailing mood is to improve the quality of those in existence. A policy of expansionism which works directly against this possibility continues in many quarters, however. Even the modest proposal of "phasing in" anything as fully earnest as the Catholic-schools effort in situations where they do not exist is fraught with procedural perils. Priests, religious, and parents tend to have a mentality which is fixed against the idea, even when bishops press them to explore it. This owing in good part to patterns of parish finance which must be altered at the diocesan and national levels before serious schemes of extra-school religious formation can be expected to work. In other words, an idea is being proposed without anything like the fiscal flexibility needed to help realize it.

The writer is at present overseeing a modest factual inquiry into the present status of those few good parish or regional schools of religion which exist (full financial and professional status being the criteria of a "good situation"). The national office of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and numerous diocesan directors have been helpful in this inquiry. They recognize that the whole country can profit from the experiments of the pioneers, whoever they are. Inevitably the breakthrough will be the work of a team of a pastor and some religious sisters (not by any means whole sisterhoods) who convince parents, originally the most resistant group of all, that this thing can work because it must work. No alternative scheme is available to get the job done. The present arrangement where no school exists can only get half the job done, and none too well at that.

Everyone who is giving the matter of the parish as the agency of effective education serious thought insists that nothing important will happen until the Catholic Church begins to get deep into the work of adult education. We are not tooled for it, of course. The parish school building is almost universally understood to be the preserve of the school staff and its students. It is normally not a parish educational building. In a variety of subtle ways it is "off limits" for the parish children of school age who do not attend it. More than that, the thrust of Catholic education is so unquestionably directed to the age group 6-18 that any attention now being devoted to the needs of adults is either given obliquely through the schools or in a painless way, i.e., in situations where no money changes hands (lectures, sodalities, study clubs, adult Confraternity programs). But any human activity which people must be pleaded with to participate in, or which runs such a poor second to the major educational commitment of the parish—the financial ratio being as high as a thousand to one—cannot expect to be taken seriously.

All sorts of things are being done to help the parish become in fact the center of religious education it is in theory. By no means the least effective agents of the changeover are the publishers. The Catholic educational effort of the past has resulted in a generation of apostolic laymen who are greatly concerned about the spread of the gospel. Some of them have access to printing presses.

Those communities of religious sisters which have polled their members on the kind of work they would like to be in are important contributors. Voluntary educators are what come of that, and they prove to be the most effective kind. (One group claims to have been able to satisfy 85% of all the requests put.) A considerable factor in the question are the catechetical sisterhoods which in the past have felt the pain of lack of status but now are in the catbird seat—provided they know what the contemporary needs are.

There are agitators for good religious education in every segment of the Church: in colleges and universities, in rectories, in NCCM and NCCW units, in CFM, in chancery offices, in seminaries. Sometimes the voices are muffled by the sound of many waters, but they will be heard. The reason they must be heard is that nothing but the parish as religious educator will ever make a Christian people of us.

Gradually the Church is coming to see which are the tasks to be handled most effectively by the various civic, social, and educational agencies in the national life. This awareness brings with it the conviction that unless the explicit task of religious formation is done well, little else will matter. The Church exists to proclaim God's Word. Despite all the shortcomings that may be laid at the door of the parish as an effective social unit, it too exists. As yet it has no rival in the work of bringing the Word of God to men.

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The human comes first

CREATING A COMMUNITY

DANIEL CALLAHAN

As in most things Catholic, the greatest obstacles to reforming the parish are human rather than theological. In principle, there is practically nothing standing in the way of a total change in parish life. All that is required to constitute a parish is that there be a minister and that there be people, a ministry and a community. Beyond that, almost anything is conceivable and possible. The parish we know today is no more than a product of history, convenience, and shifting traditions. To take an extreme case, there is nothing in Revelation which would oppose the decision of a pope to destroy every existing church building in the world and to order that, henceforth, priests should minister to the people exclusively in their homes or places of work.

Such a decision might evoke mutterings. Almost any decision about, or change in, the parish structure will. And this for a very good reason: no matter how bad any parish may be, there will be some who love it. People grow attached to the bad just as much as to the good. In changing a parish, one changes what is for many the only spiritual home they know, the home they have lived in, prayed in, made friends in and very possibly will die in. Not everyone who lives in a Victorian house would care to have a contractor come in and, presto, transform it into something fit for a prize in *Architectural Forum.*

I emphasize these human facts to make a homely point. Whatever the parish should become, it will have to remain the kind of human community in which people will feel comfortable. Not comfortable in some pejorative sense—smug, complacent, and so on—but comfortable in that people will feel wanted there, secure in their relations with others who make up the parish community, at home in the physical surroundings, stimulated by and naturally drawn into the kind of life they find there. I would count as a total failure a parish which introduced every item of reformist zeal but which, at the same time, succeeded in antagonizing all but the reformers. That hasn't happened much so far, but its opposite has prevailed for decades: those who sought sharp reform remained outsiders. In either case, the principle remains the same. Any parish which succeeds in making a large number of people feel isolated is a failure, just as is a parish which does not try to make most people feel a full, active partner in its life.

Both of these failures are characteristic of far too many parishes. Everyone knows the common complaints and I will just list them here: most parishes are too big and too impersonal; most suffer from poor communication between pastor and people, priests and people; most spend too much of their time worrying about money and facilities; most operate with the burden of lay societies and organizations which have no contemporary significance. If one adds to this depressing list the constant mobility of people from one parish to another, the class and educational differences which mark most parishes, and the great variations among priests—well, it is remarkable that the parishes have any vitality at all.

Now I realize that many believe that the key to a revitalized parish lies in the liturgy. Since the liturgy should be the focal point of the parish community, many argue, create a fine spirit of liturgical worship and all other good things will naturally follow. Actually, I suspect it will have to be the other way around. The liturgy will only take on meaning for the people, only become the center of their life, after they have first created a viable human community. The easiest thing to do in a parish is to change the liturgy and instruct the people in what it means; the hardest is to create a community.

What is the key here? It is not the liturgy. It is not the quality of the singing, sermons and homilies. It is not the enthusiasm of the laity. It is not the amount of money available, or the extent and beauty of the buildings. Instead, it is the quality of the Christian life which the people and priests share, and this quality will be a direct result of their relationship as human beings. How much do they love each other, rejoice with each other, share each other's burdens? That is the crucial question. A second key, hardly less important than the first, is the quality of the relationship between those within

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the parish and those outside of it. One measure of the parish as a Christian center is its ability to transcend its own bonds of loyalty, support and affection and to extend them to all men. All men should be loved the way one loves the members of one's parish. (That statement does not describe a fact; it commends an ideal.)

Setting the Parish into Motion

None of this will happen by itself. Some one person, or some few people will have, initially, to set the parish in motion. Left to their own resources, most people in a parish will gravitate toward those like themselves, those of like ethnic, class or educational background. They will tend to build their Christian relationships upon their natural human cliques. And that provides an important clue to the problem. Somehow a way must be found in the parish to lead people beyond their narrow alliances, to make them see that their relationship as Christians has a greater potential for friendship and affection than does any other bond. This is extraordinarily hard for most people to see. We like our own kind.

In general, there is only one effective way to achieve this broadening of relationships. The people of the parish must be led to a living sense of their responsibility for the parish—that is, for each other. But to give this any substance requires that they talk, argue and physically and mentally work together. It will be their experience in doing this which will, as much as anything else, cut through all of their natural differences as human beings. They have to physically and mentally touch each other, and this, day in and day out. Specifically, though, something more is required. There must be some few people in the parish who take it upon themselves to bring these richer relationships about to foster and strengthen them.

The most logical and appropriate person is the priest. He is the starting point, for he alone is potentially able at the outset to have the time, range of contacts and professional skills necessary to tie the human knots. As matters now stand in most parishes, it is hard for him to do so. Whatever his wishes might be, administrative chores take up a preponderance of his time. Papers rather than people are likely to be the center of his attention. This has a doubly disastrous effect. It means that he must be unduly concerned about where power and money lie among his parishioners. His first charge is the parish plant, and it is almost inevitable that he will want to see the parish structured in such a way that it contributes to the upkeep of that plant. The second disastrous effect is on the parishioners themselves. They are soon led to believe that their main utility to the parish stems from the contents of their wallet. They are good either at giving money personally or in contributing their time to those activities—bazaars, cake sales, raffles, and the like—which extract money from others. Of course many complain about this, but still more find it wholly satisfactory. In a commercial society, dedicated to the making and spending of money, nothing is likely to seem more ordinary and wholesome than commercial relationships. Throw in the presence and interest of a priest, a touch of piety, and you have just about everything too many people want.

The only way out here is to recreate totally the role of the priest, and that, in turn, entails recreating the role of the laity. So long as the pastor is charged by the bishop with the financial solvency of the parish his interests will necessarily be financial. The obvious solution here is to make the parishioners themselves, or at least a representative group, bear this responsibility. They are the ones who should do the worrying, not the priest. Trusteeism? Probably so, but structured in such a way as to avoid some of the obvious drawbacks of the old trustee system. A second requirement, closely related to the first, is that all administrative chores be delegated to the laity. It is an exceedingly rare parish today where talent can not be found to keep the books, maintain records, superintend the buildings and write the checks. Nothing is more extravagantly wasteful of a priest's training and time than to be forced into this kind of work. Nothing so dilutes the laity's sense of responsibility for the parish than the hard fact that they are given no important burdens to bear.

Breaking Up Cliques

But let us assume that the priest could be relieved of those useless drudgeries. Where should he turn his attention? The first place would be to those groupings which depend heavily upon ethnic and class affinities. His job would be to break them up, or, better, to help them break out of their self-enclosed shells. Most parishes now have only a handful of organizations, and as a rule they are least-common-denominator organizations, lacking any contemporary point or aim, directed toward attracting as many people as possible. As it usually happens, though, the direction and activities of these organizations fall into the hands of one or another clique; and they take on the tone of that clique.

Here the parish priests become crucial. If they are nervous, and many are, they are prone to like this arrangement; it gives them fewer people to keep their eye on, fewer leaders to deal with. Yet what is really

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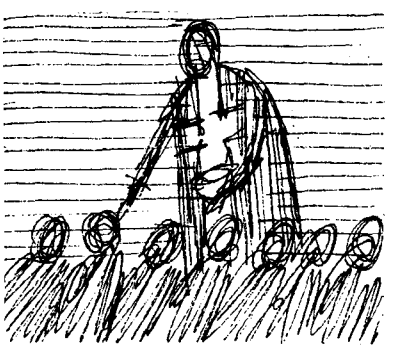
required is a great variety of organizations, built around a great range of interests. The size of the groups does not matter—some may have a hundred, others only a handful. The critical point is whether they represent concerns which have genuine spiritual and human meaning. For this kind of variety to exist requires priests who are willing to relinquish control and direction. They have to be conceived by laymen and run by laymen. The main function of priests would be that of gad-flies. They would direct parishioners toward certain groups, stimulate them with ideas and insights and encourage the formation of new groups whenever a need appeared.

On a broader level, they would see to it that all major decisions in the parish represent as broad a consensus as possible. They would unceasingly work to bring more and more people into the decision-making process. This is already being tried in some places, and it is very likely to work. But even if it does not, even if it leads to much confusion, it would still be preferable to the present arrangement which places all authority in the hands of the pastor. What counts is not the efficiency of the parish, the smoothness with which it operates, but the way in which it makes everyone a full partner. That is the essence of community.



I am suggesting, then, two special tasks for the priests and pastor. On the one hand, they should work for a wide range of small groups, each directed toward useful, spiritually profitable work or study. And the more of these there are, the less will the pastor and priests have to do with any of them directly. On the other hand, they should also work toward forging all of these individuals and small groups into a broad, decision-making body. For the parishioners themselves, the small groups will provide practical experience in spiritual self-direction; they cannot depend upon priests to guide their steps on specific problems. But as members of the whole parish, they will also learn the value of working out their common destiny as a people. All the while, the priests will constantly move about—prodding this group, instructing that, making suggestions to one, providing insights to another. They will never dominate and rarely will they lead. Their main consideration will be how well and how fruitfully the people become one.

The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, especially section 10, provides a fine set of goals. Very perceptively it emphasizes that the laity can help and assist each other and, no less significantly, that they can "refresh the spirit of pastors." I like that point, for I think very few laymen realize that they have a responsibility to care for the souls of their pastors and priests; they usually think it exclusively the other way around. The Decree also emphasizes that the laity should bring to "the Church community their own and the world's problems as well as questions concerning human salvation, all of which they should examine and resolve by deliberating in common." If I read that phrase "questions concerning human salvation" correctly, I take it the Council fathers were encouraging basic theological discussion in the parish, and saying that even these matters—formerly the sole preserve of professional theologians—are open to common lay deliberation. A very radical and provocative idea!

Outwitting Provincialism

Finally, the decree comes down hard on the importance of the parish increasingly extending its scope of interest and responsibility: to the diocesan, the national and the international level. Most parishes today are grossly provincial. Their only contact with the rest of the Church is by an occasional donation to some national or international collection. But it should be apparent that rich parishes could well adopt small parishes as part of their over-all responsibility—and by that I mean take on the debts of other parishes, which is where the bite would be most real. This would require a special kind of sanctity on the part of the priests. They would have to tolerate, even encourage, the weakening of their own parish's financial strength for the sake of other parishes. So, too, they would have to encourage people to give some of their money to secular organizations rather than to the parish. Parish priests can't be constantly reiterating their own needs, giving them primary attention, and expect the people magically to develop a sense of responsibility beyond the parish.

There have been many complaints of late about the traditional "geographical" parish, and a good case can be made that it is obsolete. But I would argue that it is as good an arrangement as any. It needs to be heavily supplemented by special parishes, professional organizations, and imaginative experiments in finding people

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where they are, whether on the job, in slums or at play. Yet the geographical parish has the great advantage of forcing very disparate assortments of people to live, worship and work together. Perhaps it is utopian to say so, but if the idea of Christian community has any significance at all, it should be able to bring into unity the most different kinds of persons. The geographical parish provides this possibility—depending, of course, on the ability of the priests and people to transcend their human differences, good in themselves, for the sake of something better. If, as sometimes happens, a parish becomes a one-class parish, then a little judicious gerrymandering of parish boundaries can help counteract this. Should that fail, then it may become imperative for parishes in different places to form working alliances with each other: suburban and inner city parishes, for instance, exchanging money, help, people and counsel.

Whatever happens, though, the test of a Christian parish will be the vitality of its human relationships. Clerical paternalism kills the human. Lay factions kill the human. Liturgy without community kills the human. Excessive building drives kill the human. Money-raising can kill the human. That alone saves the human which brings people into contact with each other, which makes of them a whole, which finds their talents and skills and tries to develop them, which makes each person responsible for every other person. There is not much of this now in the ordinary parish, and it is a shame.

We have a long way to go

ECUMENISM IN THE PARISH?

LEONARD SWIDLER

Since the Second Vatican Council's decree on ecumenism was promulgated almost a year ago, a good deal has happened in the United States. The Bishop's Commission for Ecumenical Affairs was established and has entered into the first of several contemplated series of bi-lateral theological discussions with Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Orthodox. Guidelines for inter-confessional activity have been laid down, and many dioceses on their own initiative took the opportunity of Church Unity Week in January to sponsor diocesan-wide inter-confessional liturgical services to pray for unity. In less than a year, most dioceses have appointed ecumenical commissions and a national conference on ecumenism has been set up in Baltimore.

But what about on the grass-roots level, the parish level? At this point it is difficult to determine exactly what is happening in the parishes—largely, perhaps, because not much is happening! This should not be surprising, given the enormous pace of change in the ecumenical situation since Pope John. This rapid change has occurred not only in inter-confessional contact, but also—and perhaps more importantly for Christian unity—in liturgical and theological areas. But all the same, some things have been happening in the parishes.

The goals of ecumenical activity on any level must include: 1) members of the various Churches learning to know and respect one another, 2) eliminating misconceptions, and 3) attempting to find and forge bases on which ultimate unity can be built, *so that* we may be more effective witnesses of Christ to the world. "That they may all be one . . . *so that* the world may come to believe." This does not necessarily mean full unity must be attained before we can strengthen the power of our witness. On the contrary, as we become more profoundly Christian we will be drawn toward greater unity with our separated brethren.

But the deepening and renewal of our Christian life and structures today bring an additional impetus toward unity besides the general, all-important force of Christian love. Catholics are also painfully learning that some of the central concerns of sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers and their successors pertained to the very essence of a vital Church. These include the centrality of the Scriptures in the life of the Christian, the necessity of *meaningful, communal* (vernacular) worship, the overwhelming importance of the laity (who are the clergy's *raison d'être!*), and freedom to seek and live the truth.

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Needless to say, there is a reciprocity implicit here, especially with regard to Catholic sacramental life. But as the Catholic Church deepens its renewal in these other, often under-emphasized areas, so Protestants can be expected to respond sympathetically, and eventually come to regard Catholicism in an altogether new light. Perhaps the most important thing Catholics have done on the parochial level to promote Christian unity, then, has been to renew their own Christian life by bringing the Bible more centrally into it through Bible vigils, study groups, kerygmatic catechetics and sermons, by making worship more meaningful and communal, by letting the laity (women as well as men) assume their rightful responsibilities and the parallel freedoms.

Direct and Indirect Contact

Christian unity to a wide extent has been fostered indirectly, such as through Catholic-Protestant cooperation, involving both clergy and laity, in common social and moral problems. Racism and Selma leap to mind, but there are a number of other examples where an important side result has been to serve Christian unity. And of course the area is still wide open, as is the area of direct religious contact, though here too a number of things are already underway. For some time small local groups of Protestant and Catholic, and occasionally Jewish, clergymen have been meeting periodically to discuss matters of common theological and practical interest. The National Conference of Christians and Jews alone sponsors dozens of such dialogue groups; because of their structure, however, they seldom get down to doctrinal matters. Much rarer, but worth noting, are inter-confessional groups of laymen who meet to discuss religious matters. And some parishes have invited neighboring congregations of separated brethren to observe a celebration or demonstration of their liturgy, and occasionally even to participate in a specially formed prayer service. The former has been more frequent.

An example of the latter, however, in which I participated, occurred last Lent between neighboring Catholic and Methodist churches. A series of four weekly "dialogues" between a Protestant and Catholic theologian was arranged on topics such as "The Role of Scripture" and "Freedom and Authority." After each had delivered an initial statement and a response, they answered written questions from the congregations. Perhaps it was because these "dialogues" took place alternately in the two churches—preceded, interrupted and followed by prayers and hymns—that no oral questions came from the floor. But despite this disadvantage, the total effect was quite satisfactory, as was partially indicated by the several hundreds of people who attended every week.

In addition to the usual Church Unity Week activities (e.g., special prayers after Mass, sermons stressing one aspect or another of unity), this year some local Catholic parishes invited Protestants to lecture to their congregations, sometimes even in church, as Markus Barth of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (Presbyterian) did in a church outside Boston. In one case, a Catholic layman was invited to speak before a Protestant congregation. And outside Church Unity Week, scholars of other Churches are frequently invited to speak before various organizations.

The beginnings of cooperation between parish clergy in the areas of mixed-marriages and conversions are also noticeable, much of it coming as the result of other ecumenical activities. Thus, on many occasions couples of different faiths, at the insistence of both pastors, consult with both clergy. The few mixed-marriages that have been performed jointly by two clergymen have received a certain notoriety, but hopefully the Council and subsequent work by canon law commissions and theologians will do much to relieve strained relations here.

Also seen in the new ecumenical light are conversions, which up until John XXIII were regarded by both Protestants and Catholics as an unqualified good. Many clergymen now feel it a violation of friendship and integrity to search out converts among separated brethren; some question the prospective convert very closely about his motives, and, if the situation warrants, even sends the person to see his own pastor before making a new commitment. This is not to slight the good of the individual soul in favor of over-all ecumenism. Although that concern is now present, it is rather because of it that there is much *greater* sensitivity to the good of the individual soul, devoid of any sense of competition or the attitude that we alone possess all truth and goodness.

Quite obviously, the very little that is being done in ecumenism on the parish level is relegated to a very small number of parishes. A merely quantitative increase in this activity would require much time and energy; and the present qualitative level is hardly a plateau of achievement. Moreover, as with other matters, unless the progressives are far in advance of the main body, the latter will never move significantly forward. The following suggestions, then, are of different procedures, techniques and activities that might be experimented with. Not many of them are really new, but some may be unfamiliar to many readers.

Among the activities outlined above, one of the most

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important are the theological study groups. It is quite essential to discuss mutual practical problems, and work together on common social problems, but not to the exclusion of regular, deep theological probing. The clergy should be involved in these groups, but I would urge that a growing number of sisters and educated laymen could also fruitfully participate in, and contribute to, theological discussions. The *Una Sancta* circles in Germany, for example, have involved an extremely knowledgeable laity, women and men, in profound theological discussions for over a quarter of a century.

On the practical side, these study groups can take various forms. For the sake of continuity, monthly meetings would probably be the minimum; and until friendships have formed, the meeting place might alternate between Catholic and Protestant hosts. But a congenial atmosphere and the size of the group are even more important. Thirty might be suggested as the maximum number of participants who could really take part in a discussion; the optimum is probably somewhere between five and 15.

The themes for the discussions are of course limitless. One possibility would be to take some document, e.g., the Constitution on the Church of Vatican II, as a basis for conversation, or a point of doctrine could be chosen, as for example the authority of Scripture or the place of Mary, or a suitable book or periodical article could be analyzed (might I be forgiven for suggesting that articles in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* have been found by many groups to be eminently suited for this?). One Catholic and one Protestant could prepare statements of 30 minutes *in toto*—the greater part of time being reserved for discussion—or, the statements could be given at alternate meetings. A completely different approach that has been tried with success in Germany among other places is for the group to work its way through a section of Scripture. If the group feels particularly deficient in certain areas, it might invite outside experts to lecture and participate in the discussion. This particular form could easily be expanded for a large audience.

The number of laymen who could participate in theology discussions is by no means small, as some suggest. Nevertheless, it still remains true that only a small percentage of the parish could profitably join in these theology study groups. I would like to suggest then, on a broader level, the level of the Catholic lay person who is interested and committed enough to belong to a parish discussion club or the Christian Family Movement or some other serious *study* organization, arrangements might be made with a similar sort of organization from a nearby Protestant church to meet jointly every second or third time. But perhaps beyond this something might be undertaken jointly. For example, parent and teacher groups meeting together might decide to have Protestant, Catholic and Jewish grade school children jointly put on dramatizations of scenes from the Old Testament, as part of their catechetical instructions.

But here too I would urge that a study and discussion of theology not be shied away from. If theology is the study of God and man in his relationship to God and God's creation, then every man who believes in God ought to puruse the study of the theology according to his means. Obviously, the level of technical theology discussed at these meetings will depend on the ability, background and seriousness of the participants. If a priest or minister could attend occasionally, all the better, but the discussion of theology should not be dependent upon their presence. The lay persons would be like any student of a discipline in which he is not an expert: they would try to think for themselves, but always refer back to the sources and the experts; they would avoid being cocksure and dogmatic and be constantly ready to revise their earlier thoughts and positions.

Might I also add that the study of theology necessarily will mean going to the Scriptures and the tradition of the Church for materials, but that theology in no way should be thought of as irrelevant to current life and the concrete problems of every parishioner. To be sure, there is need for a thorough discussion of practical problems by groups of Christians, and for this to be done on an ever larger scale and deeper level. But, a probing of theology by all committed Christians is also a vital necessity, so that ultimately one can bring theology to bear on the concrete problems of race, family, poverty, etc. We cannot despise the secular city, for God's people are there. But Christians must bring something to it: Christian commitment fortified by a living, personalized theology.

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A look to the future

THE PARISH—1980

THE EDITORS

It is late Sunday afternoon, and Mass is almost over. One of the parish deacons reads a report concerning a nearby urban renewal project. The priest proclaims the Mass finished, the people sent forth, and gives his blessing. The parish sings, then mills about, in what had once been a large store. In one corner people are snacking together. In another are the chatterers; in another the organizers. Adolescents are seen here and there with old people, helping them on with their coats and preparing to accompany them back to their neighborhood apartments.

This parish has 350 members. It is about the largest one in its neighborhood. Another parish, not far away and centered in the housing project erected with Church money on the land where the huge old church had stood, has only 100 members—although many Protestants participate in its activities and liturgy. Still another parish, of only 30 people, has been formed by Catholics working at a large mental health clinic. (Some of the employees live in the neighborhood and also belong to one of the neighborhood parishes.) All of them are administered by lay boards, elected and in charge of facilities and finances. All of them are small enough for the parishioners to know one another and be responsible for one another. All of them are flexible enough to respond to changing needs. In 1980, all of these parishes are determined to be the living community demanded by the liturgy and the law of love.

Take the parish whose Mass just finished. Its daily Masses are sometimes celebrated in the church, but whenever possible in different parishioners' homes, confirming the acquaintance of many parishioners as well as the relationship of the liturgy to their private lives and their daily living conditions. (This practice began in the mid-60s, but took awhile to catch on.) Daily Masses are usually celebrated in the evening by one of the married clergy (instituted in the '70s—at a time when the oversize urban parishes were finally broken up). Employed at a regular job during the day, he serves the parish along with a more highly trained, celibate and "full-time" priest who lives with a few other priests in the housing project, each of them serving a number of small parishes. On Sundays the two priests often concelebrate the parish Mass, the celibate priest preaching the homily, the married one directing those parts of the liturgy relating to the parish's specific needs and activities. The size of the parish and its presence together on Sundays also allows it to welcome the baptized into the Church and even witness weddings as a group.

The lay board meets. There is discussion of contacting new parishioners personally, of dispersing parish charitable funds and aiding parishioners and neighborhood people to gain access to the public resources they need. When the old parish was divided, the Catholic grammar school was incorporated into a diocesan school system—in which this particular new parish freely chose to participate. (Other parishes thought their energy could best be used in providing other services.) Certain problems of the local Catholic school are therefore discussed. Funds for the school are allocated, as well as funds for the Latin American parish with which this one is "coupled." One member of the lay board presents a report on an issue being widely discussed at the moment throughout the Church: whether women should not only be ordained deacons, but also priests. Another board member reports on the problem of the aged in the parish's neighborhood. Another reports on a local political dispute. The agenda for the parish meeting is determined.

Some parishes only meet as a group; this one is large enough so that sometimes, when very important matters are to be decided, small group meetings precede the parish one. At the parish meeting, new liturgical changes are explained, and proposals for parish action are made and debated. Parish involvement in controversial community affairs is frequent, but not without its opponents. How much should the parish do, *as* parish? How much should be left to individuals? To what extent must the parish reach a consensus on a solution to a "partisan" issue before it is prayed for in the liturgy? And even then, how should the position of the dissenting members of the parish community be respected? Or division with other parishes be handled?

By 1980, these questions have been debated for over a decade—with no definitive answer. But by and large,

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parishes are willing to become quite specific in their liturgy and even in the employment of parish resources on important public matters. There is constant warning against identifying the will of God with this or that particular public policy. One must remain open to dissent and correction. But one must also act. It is better to be wrong sometimes (how long it is since the Church could not imagine itself to be wrong!) than to be irrelevant.

The debate on involvement is not simply a case of the liberals against the conservatives or the activists against those who fear an equation of God's Word with a political position; it is also a debate between those favoring a tight, firmly structured parish community and those for a looser, porous one. By 1980, no one questions the way in which this genuine parish community has formed a meaningful "home" for the shifting, atomized population of the surrounding city (as have other parishes for the more affluent but still rootless suburbanites). Families arriving in this parish are welcomed and, not only cared for, but *given the opportunity to care for others*—at once, and not after years of groping for some way "to get involved." The old and the young and the others less equipped to enjoy the boundless freedoms of modern society are provided with the buffers and care they need to become or remain human. And in developing patterns for caring for the helpless, the lonely or the poor within its own community, the parish has easily extended such care to its neighbors. It has even provided its neighbors with a model (just as the presence of retired pastors in some of the parishes provided a model for respectful treatment of "elders").

But to some, this tight parish is still disturbing. They fear it will turn into a Catholic "cadre." They appreciate the family aspects of the parish, but they know that families sometimes smother their children. They are glad that when individual parishes (which are too small for even local power-plays) decide to take part in a large-scale community action, they usually act in an ecumenical group instead of solely with other parishes. (This is the fruit of frequent inter-church activities and services.) But they think the parish must be loose enough to facilitate work with secular groups and forces. They think the tight parish may become closed, satisfied with its warmth, but not learning from the world, and hence limited in its sensitivity to new problems and in its capacity to give.

The debate will never be over. Its dialectic expresses the tensions of adjustment and growth. But the debate is partially resolved when the parish attends a diocesan Mass. Not all can go, of course, but many do. (The old dioceses, too, have been broken up—though much administrative work remains organized at a supra-diocesan level. No diocese is too large for its bishop to know his clergy.) The diocesan Mass is celebrated at one of those huge churches, now a cathedral, which once served a single parish. The liturgy is more formal; it has to be. The family banquet setting is not possible. But the real fellowship of the parish supper is brought here—where there is, paradoxically, an end to parochialism, and a representation of the Church universal and eternal, the communion of saints.

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PAUL RAMSEY

SAINTS

They stand in the rare day
Of unpretentious good.
The flag they, silent, bore,
White banner and bled rag
That could the wounded bind,
Has bound them, and unbound.
Their suffering would make it
The standard for all love.

Passion shall have its say,
And has been understood.
Now brilliantly to soar,
Now rapidly to flag
And fearfully to wind
Downward, back to the ground.
With passion these forsake it
Who seek to fashion love.

What choice does not betray
The nature of its food?
Let arrogancy roar;
Then watch its fat jowls sag,
Watch its proud eye go blind,
Unless some eyes propound
The tears that can awake it
And bring it back to love.

Sometimes love comes to stay
Even in human blood.
What if the sick heart pour
Out bile and salt that lag
Within the crusted mind?
If will wills to be sound
The love saints know can break it.
The agony is love.

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To Criticize the Critic

T. S. ELIOT

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JOHN P. SISK

This latest and perhaps last collection of the work of T. S. Eliot covers the years 1917-1961. All the items, except two early essays, were originally lectures or addresses from what the author refers to as his third period, when his great influence as a man of letters, as well as the reaction against that influence, had become prime facts of modern literary life. They are concerned with the familiar Eliot subjects: Dante, the importance of the classics, the theological base of education and politics, the French symbolists, the common tradition of American and English literature, the vital relation of the individual talent to its tradition.

In the title piece of the collection, a convocation lecture delivered at the University of Leeds in the summer of 1961, Eliot is able to do something rare, if not unique, in the history of criticism: in the twilight of a long career, to survey and evaluate his own work as a critic. The aged eagle does this with genial irony as he locates himself with Dryden, Johnson, Coleridge and Arnold—writers whose criticism is a by-product of creative activity. He notes with amusement how intrepidly he had spread his wings in those early essays that "were all written for money, which I needed." He finds statements he can no longer understand, displays of erudition that now astonish him, polemic over-simplifications, occasional notes of arrogance and enthusiasms he can no longer share. As to such famous phrases as "objective correlative" and "dissociation of sensibility," he may now question their validity but sees that they were useful conceptual symbols in their time and place. It is a graceful, witty and thoroughly engaging performance.

Eliot attributes the relatively deeper impression made by his early essays and reviews to the dogmatism of youth and the fact that he "was defending the sort of poetry I and my friends wrote." Two of these essays are included: "Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry" and "Reflections on Vers Libre." Here indeed, as the Eliot of the third period observes, is "the braggadocio of the mild-mannered man safely entrenched behind his typewriter," but here too, revived for those who once experienced it, is all the excitement of the Eliot of the first period. For all the dogmatism of youth, they remain—and this is especially true of the essay on *vers libre*—important documents to students of modern poetry.

Eliot's conviction in "To Criticize the Critic" is that his appreciations of individual authors are more likely to have permanent value than his essays of generalization. However, it is the ghost of one of the latter that haunts this book: the 1917 essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" with its impersonal "catalyst" theory of the poetic mind and its emphasis on the creative interaction of past and present. I particularly sense its presence in the four lectures on the aims of education, in "American Literature and the American Language," in "The Classics and the Man of Letters" and in "What Dante Means to Me." One consequence of this ghostly presence, of course, is the kind of conservatism that has helped to incite the reaction against Eliot.

That 1917 essay, to say nothing of later essays on Dryden, Blake, Swinburne and Irving Babbitt, memorializes Eliot's anti-romanticism. It is interesting therefore to come upon the handsome praise of Shelley in the lecture on Dante. This praise may give no pleasure to the likes of F. R. Leavis but

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it would have delighted C. S. Lewis, who once attacked Eliot for the perversity of claiming that Dryden was a more classical poet than Shelley.

The fine lecture on Dante was delivered the same year (1950) that Eliot came to the University of Chicago for the education lectures. Readers familiar with *The Idea of a Christian Society* and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* will find little that is new in the Chicago material. Mrs. Eliot indicates in a prefatory note that her husband intended to expand these lectures into a book. I cannot regret their present unexpanded form; I would much prefer to see their space occupied by essays from the more dogmatic first period.

Like all the lectures, however, they are models of clarity, precision and tact. Indeed, everywhere in the book one senses the presence of that impulse to purify the dialect of the tribe that makes *Four Quartets* the great poet's poem that it is. The prose elder statesman continues to share with the poet of "Little Gidding" that passionate concern for "The common word exact without vulgarity,/The formal word precise but not pedantic,/The complete consort dancing together . . ."

A Vision of Battlements

ANTHONY BURGESS

W. W. Norton, $4.50

CHARLES ALVA HOYT

The setting sun, and music at
the close,
As the last taste of sweets, is
sweetest last,
Writ in remembrance more
than things long past.

So Shakespeare's John of Gaunt at the end of his life, musing upon a disastrous time ahead for his country. In our day England is *in extremis* again, attended in her agony by a whole chorus of sweet singers, but none with much comfort for the patient. The novel at least in Britain is healthy, with something of the luxuriance of Byzantine art just before the Turks, or vegetation riotous in the graveyard. One way or another these brilliant writers are all prophesying doom, whether in the weary drawl of Anthony Rowell, the I'm-all-Right-Jack flippancies of Kingsley Amis, or the angry reproofs of Alan Sillitoe.

These men are all better known here than Anthony Burgess, but none is more productive—eight novels published in five years—nor has a better ear, for he is a professional musician and composer. Indeed, part of the reason for his comparative obscurity may be simply that it is difficult for the critics to catch up to him, he moves so swiftly and in so many directions. Musician, scholar (he has a book on Joyce), dabbler in a dozen dialects and experiments, he is a hard man to classify. Let us be wary, then, and say first of all that he is a good novelist, consistently interesting whatever he tries.

His most recent book, *A Vision of Battlements*, is actually his first. Apparently he has acquired enough prestige to be able to cash in his early work, as Nabokov and William Golding have been doing. *Battlements* was written in 1949 and understandably enough, he has learned a good deal since. It is by no means his best and yet of course it is vital to an understanding of him, as it is solidly autobiographical, although, typically, cast as an ingenious parody of *The Aeneid*: the hero Ennis (Aeneas) battles Turn-

Bernard Haring, CSSR

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er (Turnus), betrays his lover (Dido) and so on. "The use of an epic framework," Mr. Burgess tells us in a pleasant introduction, "was not mere pedantic wantonness, nor was it solely a tribute to James Joyce; it was a tyro's method of giving his story a backbone. . . ."

But in this valuable commentary, Burgess has given the student signs of the preoccupations which underlie all his works: first, a musician's love of sound combinations, both sweet and startling; second, a real erudition, no pedantry, which fills his novels with literary references, and third, a vigorous and highly intelligent inquiry into the problems of modern England. I would add two items which he does not allude to in his introduction: a curiosity about homosexuality and a recurrent tendency towards unhappiness.

A Vision of Battlements is perhaps as much of a *bildungsroman* as we are likely to get from this unusual man—although Brian Moore recently presented us with one at a late stage in his career. Briefly, it tells of the troubles of a second-rate composer stuck at silly, demeaning work on Gibraltar near the end of World War II. It is a funny but frustrating story of an early anti-hero, as its author himself claims in his introduction. Burgess' credo, however, appears with considerably more force in his second novel (the first published), *The Right To An Answer*. Here he actually begins with a denunciation of "the mess so many people seem to be in nowadays." With this rather naive and protracted invocation cut of the way, he manages to come to grips with his subject in striking fashion. Again he enlists the great figures of the past: in a brilliant climax, the novel's sottish heroes come upon a priceless early quarto of *Hamlet*, over which they ponder profitlessly, swine before a pearl.

His experiments with language are challenging and sometimes troublesome. *A Clockwork Orange* explores teenage argot, while *Nothing Like The Sun* is a *tour-de-force* fictionalized biography of Shakespeare, utilizing all sorts of

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bewildering techniques: hundreds of hidden allusions and quotations, all in Elizabethan dialect and presented in stream-of-consciousness. Unquestionably his finest novel is *Honey For The Bears,* a wild story of a British huckster's larcenous expedition to Russia. Every page brings some new revelation of sound or absurdity; and here too he investigates at some length such diverse matters as Soviet manners and the nature of homosexuality, both with great ease and sureness.

Burgess is certainly a man to reckon with, if indeed he is one man and not a syndicate, like the all-knowing critic of *Time* magazine. There is no way of telling what he may attempt next, but one thing is sure: he deserves a large audience to cheer him on.

The Inspired Word

LUIS ALONSO SCHÖKEL

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ROLAND E. MURPHY

The third chapter of the Constitution on Revelation from Vatican II treats in a general way of biblical inspiration and its effects, and it calls attention to the literary aspects of the Bible. For the implications of this doctrine one must go to the modern studies which form the underpinning of conciliar theory. Father Alonso Schökel has provided a highly successful synthesis of these studies, while at the same time going into the problem of (biblical) language at some depth (notice the sub-title: "Scripture in the Light of Language and Literature").

His starting point derives from the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "who spoke through the prophets." What does it really mean to speak and to write? The scholastic approach to the "inspired word" has always been concerned about speculative and practical judgments of the writer. Thanks to his familiarity with modern literary criticism, the author brings to bear the categories of linguistic analysis: statement or symbolizing, expression, address. Language in *all* its functions is put to the service of biblical analysis—and enjoyment. The reader can test this for himself in the example of God's love, as expressed by Hosea (11:1-9), in contrast to the naked "judgment" that God loves His people. Such judgments are not to be denied, but the literary realization is equally or more important in the process of inspiration —otherwise the divine message will be flattened out in a manner contrary to its incarnational expression. This study makes explicit to us what is involved in an inspired *literary* work—on all levels: sound, rhythm, image, concept and literary genre. "The work in its totality is inspired, and this affects each element and stratum according to its nature and function; thus, the revelation of God gains entrance to us by every facet of our being which can be influenced by reality."

Modern insights have established the role of oral tradition in the formation of the Bible, especially the Old Testament. With this current there were also

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various stages of writing—to preserve a message against time, to add juridical value to a word. This complex relationship between speaking and writing serves as background to the discussion of Scripture and Tradition, and the author comes down in favor of their organic and integral unity. The consequences of this for theological study are important. The old "proof from Scripture" must yield to the actualization of the Bible within the community that is the Church. One cannot be "content with a psychological exegesis which restricts itself entirely to the mind of the author as the only norm for determining the meaning of the text."

The real meaning of biblical inerrancy is brought out by an analysis of various types of truth—the truths of literature as presented by Hans Meyerhoff, the truth of witness, of authenticity, and of dialogue, and not merely logical truth. Thus the Bible presents itself as more than a quantity of truths: "The Scriptures often provide us with a knowledge born of familiarity; this is the way we come to know God as Someone Who comes and associates with men. . . . This most important aspect of the truth of the Scriptures can never be adequately conveyed in propositional form."

This approach is particularly significant for the new experience of Catholics in the liturgy. The whole assembly hears the word of God proclaimed, and in this proclamation a literary work receives a fullness of existence—its meaning is *realized*, not just remembered. A literary work, of its very nature, cannot be exhausted by one re-presentation, but neither should it be stifled by a lifeless reading. The power of the Scriptures is also dependent upon the humble office of lector; God really acts

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REVIEWERS

JOHN P. SISK *is chairman of the English Department at Gonzaga University.*

CHARLES ALVA HOYT *teaches at Bennett College in New York.*

FATHER ROLAND E. MURPHY, *O. Carm., editor of the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, was Visiting Professor at Yale Divinity School last fall.*

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through His word (and not merely on the occasion of its being read).

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CORRESPONDENCE

(*Continued from page 3*)

highlighted by the short exchange in the Feb. 18 issue between "the entire Department of Theology of the University of San Francisco" and the lone Father Baum.

Problem 1: The Catholic absolutist mind as exemplified in the letter from the theological faculty is one that anticipates papal reinforcement of the strict traditional bans on most forms of birth limitation.

Problem 2: The process of clarifying and possibly modifying the traditional stand is an ambiguous one—at least for me. The appointment of a papal commission has moved the topic to a distance rather remote from public scrutiny although the topic is one of vital public interest.

Problem 3: Although Father Baum's position on the difference between infallible and authoritative teaching appears to be unassailable, his formulation may not account for gaps that may arise between these two types of teaching. Could not such a gap arise over this question? For years what has stared Catholic consciences in the face as Gospel truth was the proposition that there was an absolute involved, not only in the marriage bond itself, but also in the sexual act and its performance in the context of marriage. Soon Catholics may be *told* not that there was any substantial imperfection in this proposition, mind you, but that certain details of interpretation and emphasis were not elaborated fully.

Problem 4: What can be done to prepare Catholics for the decision when it does come? Inevitably there will be considerable, even widespread, dissatis-

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faction with certain aspects of the decision. This will not comprise a unique situation. But would it not be fairer to Catholics if coherent, intelligible digests of the papal commission's work, regardless of progress made, could be published for interested persons? It seems over-optimistic to me to expect Catholic laymen to comprehend instantly and obey unhesitatingly decisions arrived at in secret after much dispute and deliberation by eminent, knowledgeable men even when one of these men happens to be the universal pastor.

ROLAND LAIRD

Newman at the Council

Ann Arbor, Mich.

To the Editors: Despite what Mr. John Coulson might think ("News and Views," February 25), Cardinal Newman *was* at the Second Vatican Council. He helped draft the long sentence in the Declaration on Christian Education that mentions "associations and university centers under Catholic auspices . . . even at universities that are not Catholic" to supply "abiding spiritual and intellectual assistance" to the ninety-five percent of Catholics in higher education not alluded to in the other thirty-two paragraphs of this remarkable document. An examination of Newman's letters written in 1864 discussing the establishment of an Oratory at Oxford indicates the substantial continuity of the Council Fathers with his position then.

It is true that the Cardinal's arresting conclusion—"the open university, when complemented by a strong mission may be even safer than a closed Catholic college"—did not find its way into the aula. But, for that matter, it has not yet found its way into the stated policies of the Newman Apostolate: "There can be no ideally perfect education which is not Christian Education. This is best achieved by the Catholic college and university where God is *centrally* studied and daily worshipped."

The view expressed by the Declaration seems to reflect the stand taken by the editors of *America* in the 1920's when they at no time opposed adequate facilities for the proper work of a chaplain at a State university but opposed an undue extension into the educational field at these institutions lest souls be lost and such arrangements have a destructive effect upon the Catholic colleges of the country. But Mr. Coulson's interesting game about who was and who was not at Vatican II can be expanded further. In 1905 Pius X in his encyclical, *Acerbo Nimis*, called for the establishment of schools of religion in academies and universities wherein no mention was made of God. The Declaration nowhere cites *Acerbo Nimis*. Not even in a footnote.

(REV.) JOHN WHITNEY EVANS

"Leo's Frenetic Fugue"

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: As a regular and rarely dissenting reader of your journal, I find John Leo's recent (January 28) frenetic fugue in exceptionally bad taste. His own personal image as a man does not

Topical

THERE IS WIDESPREAD demand for the special issues—focused, like this March 25 issue, on a single pertinent topic—which Commonweal brings out from time to time as a service to our subscribers. Two extra printings of the January 14 issue on the New Morality were soon exhausted and only a few hundred reprints of the Fletcher-McCabe debate itself are still available. Earlier issues on Responsible Parenthood and on Federal Aid to Education are completely out of stock.

In contrast with such focus on a single topic is the wide range of interest Commonweal normally manifests week by week. The other March issues, for example, have devoted full-scale attention to such topics as: urban poverty and slum housing, rebel Father Torres' death in Colombia, Robert Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey, the Council and contraception, the human cost of Vietnam, the vogue of Humphrey Bogart, Judaism today and the non-religious conscientious objector.

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project too strongly but the venom with which he curls out the word *Vincentian* does. After he gets it all out of his system, whatever it is, Leo's distinct but dubious contribution to twentieth-century Catholic thought may be only semantic: ranking *Vincentian* alongside of Jesuitical. Thank God (I use the entire phrase univocally) that devoted *Vincentian* alumni and occasionally a noted person such as Jacqueline Kennedy will hold the name *Vincentian* in warm memory.

John Leo, the compulsive champion of liberty at all costs, writes with classic bad taste and some disregard for basic human rights when he humorously conjectures about Father Tinnelly's reply to a questioning reporter. Not only must the *Vincentian's* answer be leonine but his *prayer* must too. In both, *Vincentians* fail miserably. As a previous correspondent to these pages asked: "Is liberty just for laymen?" How much of Leo must any priest in this country take and still not lose sight of the truth and the great causes proposed by magazines like COMMONWEAL? The objective facts which Leo presents are often lost in a miasma of irresponsible invective. Must Leo always characteristically titillate?

Father Tinnelly, allowing for God's running His world, and very uncreatively borrowing from the Lord's Prayer, replied to the newsman: "The university will pull through if it is God's will." If the *Vincentian*, pre-typed as a non-intellectual *Vincentian*, had prayed for straight success, would Leo have blessed us with a diatribe on the pitiful pitfalls of the prayer of petition? For fourteen lines, however, we get a keen analysis of many of the hidden motives and possible outcomes of the *Vincentian's* prayer. Leo's closing bit of wishful thinking, both naughty and nautical, is precious close to *his* desire to play God and predetermine the whole remaining course of St. John's salvation history. What suddenly happened to the emerging layman's "people of God" bit? Without any "pious sentiment" nor irreverence this priest would beg the omniscient Leo: Master Leo, *you* teach us how to pray.

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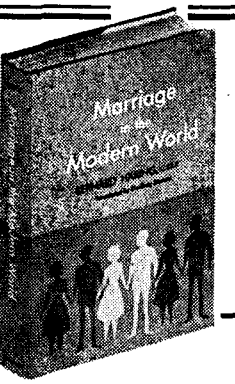

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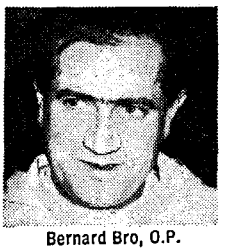
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